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AND

Jephthah's Daughter

By Julia Magruder.

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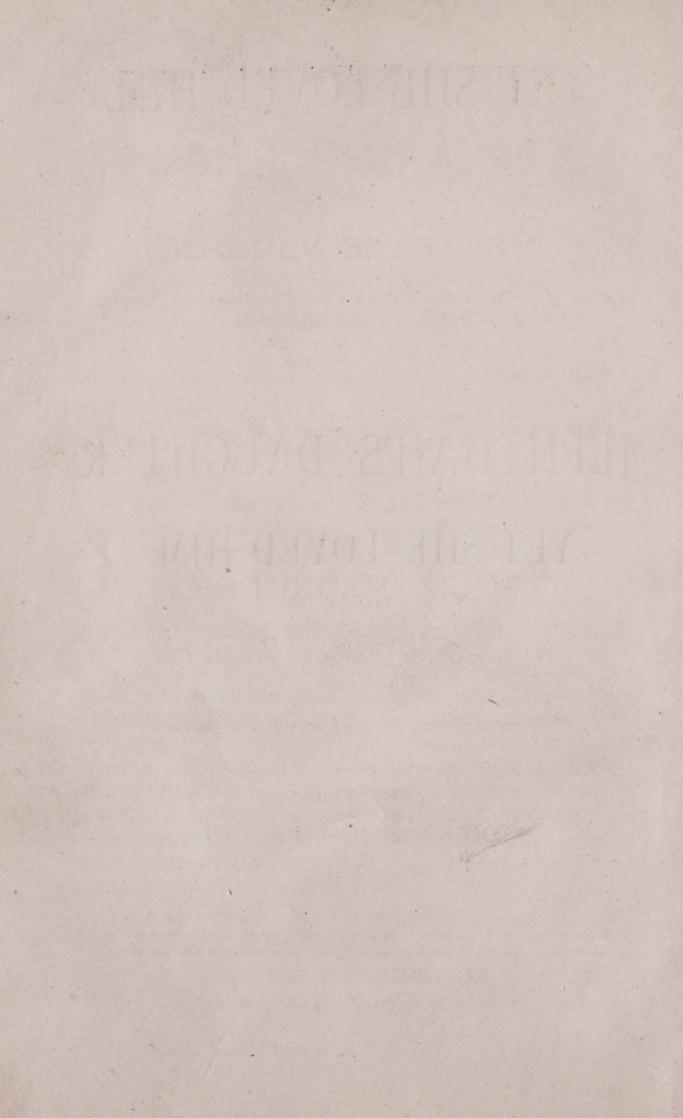
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YET SHE LOVED HIM.

IN THE CHINA SEA



YET SHE LOVED HIM.

BY

MRS. KATE VAUGHN,

Author of "The Mother's Legacy," "The Banker's Daughter," "Erin-Go-Bragh," "The False Friend," etc., etc.

AND

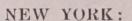
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Author of "Across the Chasm," "At Anchor," "Honored in the Breach," "A Magnificent Plebeian," etc.

WITH ILLUSTRATION BY WARREN B. DAVIS



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YET SHE LOVED HIM.

CHAPTER I.

T'S of no use, Cicely! My only chance of ever being anything but the poor devil I am is to avoid offending my uncle. Let him once suspect I have married you, or any one unknown to

him, and I may as well give up the game."

"But you told me," sobbed a beautiful young woman, turning a pair of splendid dark eyes, drowned in tears, upon him—"you told me when you took me from home that within a year you would acknowledge me openly as your wife, and here I am, after all these years, a miserable, unhappy, half-and-half sort of person, whom ladies won't recognize, and whom other people are often barely civil to!"

She was very handsome, poor soul, but her beauty was sadly marred by lines of coarseness and discontent.

"Well, my dear, it is to put an end to all that I am going," said Lawrence St. John, impatiently. Then, his countenance darkening, he added: "But if you are troublesome you will upset my plans. And remember, so sure as you do that, I have done with you. I mean either to send for you or come back within a year, and you will get money whenever I have it. If you don't get it, remember it is because I have none, and any fuss or clamor will only make matters the worse for you and ruin me. Come now, be reasonable. Dry your eyes and say good-by."

"Oh, Lawrence! You will keep your word to me? You will come back!" cried unhappy Cicely. throwing herself on his breast.

"Of course. I can't help myself. If I get no money I must sell out. Then England will be no place for me. If I do get it, I will send for you, but mind, wait patiently. Don't you dare to come after me, or you shall starve; I will never look at you again if you come between me and my plans."

His looks were full of ominous anger as he spoke, and the poor foolish girl, who loved him through much bad treatment and neglect, withdrew, shuddering, from his cold, unsheltering breast, and sobbing once more her entreaties for him to keep his word, she uttered a broken farewell, and Captain St. John hastily left the house.

"Thank heaven that's over! What a fool I must have been ever to tie such a log as that to my leg! Well, the break is made. If I can only keep her in funds, I don't believe she will give me much

trouble. She likes New York, and would not dare follow me. She 'il drink herself to death if she only has money enough. But if she bothers me she must look to herself."

* * * * * * *

More than the promised year passed by, and Lawrence St. John, instead of returning to America, or sending for Cicely, is in Ireland, seeking the ruin of another woman's life. He has been visiting Lord Ferrars at Ballyreen; it is his last night, and he is standing beneath the oaks in the park; by his side is a lovely girl, beautiful Lady Madge Doyle, Lord Ferrars's daughter and heiress.

"My darling, how can I leave you," he murmured, "knowing you will soon be surrounded with men who will have your father's approval in paying court to you, while I, almost penniless, will be eating my heart out with jealousy."

"Jealousy! How could you be jealous, when

you know I love you so dearly?"

"But, my precious, see how you will be tempted!" He gazed into her upturned face, his dark eyes bending into hers, and the girl thrills beneath his glance and her eyes sink. "My darling! My darling! If I could be sure of you!" he murmured, pressing her passionately to him and turning her radiant face up toward him. She felt his bosom swell, and believed it was with genuine emotion, and desired only to reassure and comfort him with proofs of her own love, and told him so. "Madge, my precious, my own," he said, kissing her sweet lips between every word, "will you give me one proof?"

There was no one to warn her, to save her, and she answered:

"I will; oh, gladly!"

"Marry me then, my darling."

"But—my father!" she cried, startled, yet not for a moment realizing the gravity of what he asked.

"That is just it, my dear. I am now but a poor soldier. He would never give you to me; but, once married, I shall have courage to leave you, to do everything to make myself worthy of you; and if you are once mine, we shall gain your father's consent sooner or later."

"But he is not well. I cannot grieve him now. Oh, it would break his heart!"

"It need not, my own love. Marry me directly you get to Dublin, and we will keep the secret till the time for telling him comes."

"Why not wait?" she asked, tremulously. "I will try to make him listen to me. He is very good and will deny me nothing."

"Do not torture me," he said with a fierce impatience, which coming, as it seemed, from love, was sweet to her. "I cannot bear it! I cannot leave you! Ah, if you love me, what is it to do? You may keep the secret as long as you like, it will only let me know beyond a doubt that you are mine—my own, sweet, little wife!"

She trusted him utterly, and the fatal promise was given; and then, blushing and trembling with the sweet dawn of her girl's love, she escaped from his arms and rushed into the house.

A week later and Lord Ferrars and his daughter

and the young lady whom he allows her to have with her, instead of the usual elderly chaperon, are in Dublin, and Madge has confided what she believes to be her secret to Laura Perceval, who knows it already and has worked to bring it about.

Miss Perceval was as handsome in her way as Lady Madge, although ten years her senior, and her dark beauty was yet unfaded notwithstanding her twenty-seven summers. But when Madge, the evening after she had given her promise to St. John, entered her friend's room in her white peignoir, her golden hair rippling round her in a sunny cloud, her blushing face radiant with happiness, and confessed her secret, no one would have supposed, from the start of dismay with which Laura had heard it, that Lawrence St. John had regularly reported progress to his coadjutrix. Indeed, although they had met apparently as strangers, when St. John arrived at Lord Ferrars's, his being there at all was in consequence of an understanding with Laura, who was his half-sister, and the invitation to stay at Ballyreen, apparently casually given by Gerald, Lord Ferrars's nephew, and as casually accepted, as a matter of fact had been planned and schemed for months; Lawrence St. John had determined to ignore poor Cicely, and to risk everything and marry the heiress, whose companion Laura was; and Laura was equally determined to make a breach between Lord Ferrars and his daughter. Her object will be seen later, but in order to carry it out the pair of adventurers had agreed mutually to aid each other's plans with a mental reservation on the part of each of them, that such plans must in no case interfere with his or her own, and it may here be said that St. John had no idea of Laura's own object; he believed she was helping him for what she would gain when he was master of Lady Madge's fortune, and she allowed him to think so.

And therefore when sweet Madge, in her girlish joy, told her false friend the promise she had made, Laura concealed the triumph she felt, and pretended to dissuade Madge from the perilous step she was about to take; but the very arguments she used seemed to Madge to show how selfish she would be to let prudence rule her.

Thus it was that, one cold, foggy morning, poor Lady Madge stood at the altar of an obscure little church, and before she had half realized the gravity of the step she was taking, she was made a wife.

Her first downward step!

A dismal sense of her folly took possession of her mind the minute the dreary ceremony was over. What a way for Lord Ferrars's daughter to marry!

And then she thought of her father who idolized her—surely he would forgive her when he knew her husband better. But when St. John took her in his arms and kissed her, and talked rapturously of their future, she was comforted. All would be well, of course, and the sweet, tremulous lips again parted in a confiding smile.

At the church-door they separated, St. John to return to the Curagh of Kildare, where his regiment was, and Lady Madge and Laura to Merrion Square, and when she again reached her father's house none suspected the fatal drama that had just begun.

The secret was well kept, and Lord Ferrars and his household left Dublin for his annual visit to his English estate of Melford, in Devonshire, without it being suspected. But the storm was about to break.

Lord Ferrars, generally so placed and calm, was in his library in a state of agitation very unusual to him. An open letter was in his hand.

"It's a lie, of course; anonymous letters always are. I ought to have thrown it in the fire; but there may have been some girlish folly connected with this fellow. I wish to heaven I had known before what I know now—he never would have entered my doors. I never shall forgive Gerald unless he can prove to me he also was deceived. My poor, motherless girl! Heaven grant that I have not been too blind! I ought to have guarded her better. But I will show her this, in case there has been any romantic nonsense. She will see what sort of man he is. But who can have written it?" he muttered, as he rang the bell. "Some one who wants to balk St. John, if he has any designs on my little Madge."

While he waited for Madge to come he reread the note for the twentieth time.

"My LORD: A friend who cannot know of a great wrong without making an effort to prevent it entreats you to guard your daughter. Captain St. John is pacifying his creditors with assurances that he is to marry Lady Margaret Doyle, the heiress, and as they correspond, the writer fears this warning may even now be too late."

There was no signature.

"It is very strange. Who could have written this?"

The door opened, and Lady Madge, beautiful as ever, but with a more thoughtful expression on her sweet, young face than when she went so gayly to her ruin three months before stood before him. Her secret burdened her.

"My dear, I have something very serious to talk to you about. Listen to this letter."

He took up the anonymous note and read it.

To his surprise, instead of an indignant outburst, she was silent; the color left her cheek, and she seemed as if she could hardly support herself.

"Madge, you look strange! Can you not tell me there is not the slightest foundation for this story?"

Madge recovered herself somewhat. She had known the truth must be told some time, only she had believed she would have the telling of it herself. Better, perhaps, as it was.

"Papa—I have lacked courage to tell you, but—but I have long loved Captain St. John."

She had expected some terrible outburst of anger, and was not prepared for the calm irony with which he said:

"Indeed! And you actually lacked courage to tell me that ridiculous fact? And well you might! Do you know what and who this St. John is? No, of course not! How should you? I assure you I did not, or he would never have darkened my doors! Well, he is simply an adventurer, trading on his good looks and smooth tongue for a living. He was brought here by your cousin Gerald, who, for

having dared so abuse my hospitality, will never enter my house while I live. I suppose he got Gerald to introduce him by the same means as he elbowed his way into other houses, which he could never have entered by fair means. His lever is debt; he plays with such unlucky young fools as fall in his way, and as they cannot easily pay, he allows their debt to stand, provided they will make him one of themselves. He is an heiress-hunter, and hopes to meet with some elderly spinster who will give herself and her money into his keeping. Since I have been in Dublin I heard his character. I ordered Gerald to take care he never again came to my house. I had no idea then that I had to defend my own nest, but I was determined, so far as I had power to veto it, his audacity should not succeed. Now Madge, I suppose I have said enough to cure your romantic fancy. I shall, of course, expect you to give me your word that you will hold no correspondence with him at any time."

He looked at his beautiful daughter as he spoke; he did not like the firmly-set mouth, the kindling eye and haughty head.

"Father, some enemy—the same who wrote that letter, perhaps, has slandered Lawrence St. John to you! I know and love him!"

"Madge, this is idle nonsense! I do not want to play the part of a melodramatic father, but I forbid you to hold any communication with him. Prepare to leave this place to-morrow. We shall go to Germany for a couple of years. I trust time will bring you to your senses."

Madge swept a low courtesy to her father, that had as much proud defiance as respect in it, for her Irish blood was up, and then, with a stately step, she left the room. But the instant she was out of the sight of servants her pride gave way, and she rushed along the corridor to her own room, there to weep in indignation and love.

She had not long been thus indulging the luxury of woe when the door opened and Laura entered. She went to the couch on which Madge had flung

herself.

"What is the matter, my darling?"

"Oh, Laura! Papa has found out about St. John. What can I do? He forbids my ever seeing him or hearing of him again, and says we shall start for Germany to-morrow."

"Then he does not know all?" said Laura, with a soft note of inquiry in her voice.

"No; I had not courage to tell him. What can I do? To go to Germany is impossible!"

"Quite, my dearest. You have no choice now. Your first duty is to your husband. Your father will come to reason when he sees opposition will do no good."

"Ah, yes!" she cried, starting up. "I must go; I must go to Lawrence. Yet it kills me to leave dear papa so ungratefully; he has been such a loving father hitherto! But I must! I must!"

"You must, my darling girl, and leave it to time, which cures all things, to cure his unreasonable prejudices."



CHAPTER II.

Captain St. John was lounging on a couch in his London chambers, ostensibly reading, for he had a yellow-covered book in his hand as it hung down by his side, and his finger was between the leaves, but his real ocupation seemed to be watching the smoke of his cigar as it floated in fragrant rings of blue mist over his head.

A very handsome man undeniably, and one who evidently knew his beauty and its power. No coquette's toilet could have been more artistic or more cleverly arranged for effect than his. Dainty slippers and silken hose shod his shapely feet; a picturesque dressing-gown, gray, with crimson sash, and silk lining of the same brilliant color, enveloped his graceful form; his hands, white and soft, and singularly small, yet strong as a man's should be, were guiltless of rings. Their owner knew that, in the case of hands, "beauty unadorned is adorned the best."

Yet, looking at Mr. St. John's face, a physiognomist would have said that he was something more than the "curled darling" he seemed. There was a good deal of cleverness in those handsome features, and perhaps some craft and some weakness. Those who knew him succumbed to the charm of his manner; a gay, good humor always characterized him; and when those who had known him would know him no longer, they still said of him that he was a deucedly pleasant fellow, if a dangerous one.

He smoked luxuriously for some time, and then stretched forth his hands for a packet of letters which lay on a table near; they had been brought in some time during the day, but he had been too indolent to open them.

They were not tempting-looking epistles, promising pleasant gossip, but for the most part blue enveloped, and suggestive of bills. A few square covers daintily addressed ought to have had a better fate than to have lain so long unwelcomed. One among them he opened first, and began to read.

"Little Madge beginning to lose patience," he muttered. "Fools women are." As he came to this conclusion, the door opened, and a servant, evidently a son of Erin, entered, saying hurriedly:

"There's a lady to see you, sir—Lady Margaret St. John, she says."

Lawrence gave a low whistle.

"The devil!" he exclaimed. And when Madge entered the room, beaming, forgetting everything in the joy of seeing the man she loved so dearly, there was a great deal more of dismay than of pleasure in his greeting.

Madge flew toward him when she saw him and threw herself in his arms, half-laughing, half-crying, before he had made a step toward her.

"Really, Madge, this is most unexpected! What

can it mean?"

Madge's affectionate nature was quick to see the coolness of this welcome, and, drawing herself up, wounded to the quick, she said:

"This means that I have left all to come to my husband. My father has found out that I loved you, and he told me some dreadful things about you, which, of course, I don't believe, but as I could not promise never to see you again, I came away last night, and it seems now as if you hardly want me."

Her lips quivered, and her eyes filled at the sup-

position.

"Why, yes, my dearest, I'm delighted, I'm sure, only you see I am so surprised." And then, without thinking she must need rest and refreshment after her long journey, he made her relate everything that had happened, and when she had done so, he said, impatiently: "So your father did not find out about our marriage? Why did you act so hastily? If you had had a little patience it would have been better."

"Yes," said Madge, swallowing her tears. "I see it would. Can I have a cup of tea, please?"

"Oh, yes, of course. I forgot."

He rang the bell and ordered Terry to get some tea; but the man, more thoughtful than himself, knowing more than his master thought of the state of affairs, had already anticipated the lady's need

and brought in a dainty meal of cold chicken, Perigord pie, delicate rolls and tea. It was plain Mr. St. John's larder was well supplied, but poor Madge, who had expected to be received with some of the rapture her husband had ever shown at those stolen meetings in the park at Ballyreen, was chilled to the heart, and left all the dainty food untouched, taking only a cup of tea.

"You see, Madge," said her husband, feeling, perhaps, that his welcome was not just what might be expected. "You see, I'm in a devil of a fix. I've no money, and I can't have you knocking about in lodgings."

He came and sat down beside her, and she, poor, weary girl, who had never known what it was to travel witout her father or Laura, leaned her head on the breast which she felt so sure was a harbor of refuge for her, but which she now began to doubt. Yet when he caressed her and told her his concern for her alone had caused his coolness, her old buoyancy returned, and she would not doubt him.

Lawrence was one of those peculiar, but not rare, persons who, having no money, seem to live more luxuriously than those who have a moderate income; thus, although he had not five pounds in the world when his wife came, he determined to go out and look for a charming little furnished house and seek a maid to attend Lady Margaret; for he reflected, as he had married Madge for her wealth, it was of no use to treat her so as to drive her back to her father and thus lose all chance of it, and so he changed his manner, tenderly bade her lie down on

his bed in the inner room and rest, while he went out to make arrangements for her comfort.

This Madge now did, for she was tired; and Lawrence, calling Terry to help him, dressed himself and went out, carefully locking away the letters, that were still lying on the table, before he did so. There were certain of those square enveloped billets that must not meet the eye of his wife.

Madge believed she would not sleep for excitement; but she had not lain down many minutes when she lost consciousness and slept soundly.

She was roused by loud tones in the next room—the tones of a woman and Terry's whispered expostulations—whispered in the loud, ear-piercing whisper which is so distinct. He was evidently excited, and his Irish brogue, so carefully smothered usually, came out richly now.

"Arrah, thin, and whin I tell you you cannot see the capt'in—he's out—won't ye take no for an answer?"

"I tell you I'll wait. I wrote to Captain St. John to tell him that if he did not come to me I should come to him, and here I am."

The voice was young but uncultivated, and Madge could distinguish the rustle of a stiff silk dress.

She rose upon the bed in astonishment. At first she could hardly remember where she was; then her husband's name recalled her. She heard Terry answer, in an agony of anxiety that she might not hear:

"But you can't stay here, ma'am, for there 's a lady here, sleeping in the next room! Poor young lady!"

"'Lady!'" cried the woman, angrily. "Then I'm going in to see about that! What do you mean by trying to stop me? I am Captain St. John's wife!"

"You can't go," said Terry, planting himself in the woman's way. "Ye shall not go in that room, I tell yez! For that's a born lady in there?"

"'A born lady!' And ain't I a lady, fellow?"

At this moment poor, bewildered Madge could hear the outer door open, and in a moment her husband's voice. There was no mistaking the consternation of his tone as he exclaimed:

"What—Cicely!" Then, remembering his wife's proximity, he said, in a lower tone: "How the deuce did you come here? What business had you to leave America?"

"I came after you! I am your wife, and-"

"Hush—hush!" he exclaimed. Then, going near the woman, he said, whispering: "For goodness' sake hold your tongue! You will ruin me, and yourself, too, if you have not already! Go out now; walk on slowly, and I'll follow and explain. You must help me, and your fortune's made as well as mine. I swear I'll come. You may depend on it, for I dare not have you here again."

These low-toned sentences Lady Madge did not hear, but she guessed a whispered conference was taking place, and then she heard St. John approach the door.

Her first instinct was to hide the terrible knowledge that had come to her. She could not face her husband at this moment; she must have time to

think. Oh, that she might never see him more! She lay down on the pillow, from which she had partly risen, and buried her head in it. St. John lifted the *portière* that masked the door and looked in. She was apparently sleeping. He breathed freely. She had heard nothing.

He returned to the other room, from which the woman Cicely had gone, and opening an escritoire he took from it a tiny box and opened it. A gorgeous ring lay within it—a serpent, whose head was made of emeralds, with diamond eyes. He took it from the box and looked at it with a sinister smile.

"I thought this bauble would be a handy thing to have if she ever became dangerous. Let me see the secret of it over again."

He took a thin, folded paper that had lain under the ring, and opening it, read in Spanish:

"On pressing the diamond forming the right eye, looking at it from the front, the tongue is thrust out; on pressing both eyes, the tongue ejects its venom."

"Now, the venom has to be taken on trust. I can't make a journey to Brazil to get a fresh supply if once discharged, but I can see how the tongue business works."

He turned the head of the ring toward him and pressed the small diamond on the right. A tiny, arrow tongue sprang out of the mouth; it was not thicker than a needle. On removing the pressure it flew back, and the ring appeared a mere costly bauble.

St. John put it in his pocket and rang for Terry, whom he told to make Lady Margaret St. John com-

fortable and tell her that she had been sleeping so comfortably on his return he had not disturbed her, and to tell her also to take dinner without him, as he had to go and settle about their house.

Terry looked after him as he left the house.

"Bad cess to yez for a villain!" he muttered. "And to think an honest b'y like meself, as was body-servant to the Jook av Queenston's second cousin, should come to serve the likes o' yez and that swate craythur beyont! Ach, but it's messilf 'd like to tell her some av the things I know."

Many of Mr. St. John's elegant associates wondered why he had brought an Irish valet with him and laughed at him for his "importation." He had told them: "The fellow was so deuced amusing, it was like having a comic opera to oneself." But his real reason was because he changed valets very often, and as they generally went away without their wages he was beginning to find it difficult to replace them. He was not in good odor with the fraternity in London, Terry, then, who, notwithstanding his brogue, was an accomplished servant, seemed a very good investment, for Mr. St. John well knew that he would be less exacting about prompt payment of wages than a London valet. He little supposed a valet, especially an Irish one, who ought to be grateful to a London fine gentleman for engaging him at all, would dare to act the censor!



CHAPTER III.

Directly Madge heard her husband leave the house she started up.

She had but one thought. She must get away somewhere—anywhere away from this.

She had not a friend in this great city of London—not one! Numberless acquaintances—not one friend to whom, having left her father's house, she dare apply.

She flung on her bonnet and pelisse. Fortunately, although rich, they were the plainest her wardrobe contained, and then she went into the outer room. She meant to leave the house without a word; but Terry was putting away St. John's belongings, and when he saw Lady Madge's white, agonized face, he hastened to deliver the message Captain St. John had left for her.

There was a ring of sympathy in his voice, or was it because the words were uttered in the soft accent so dear to her Irish heart? Be what it may, her lips trembled as she said falteringly:

"Tell—tell Mr. St. John I heard all. He will understand."

Terence looked at her with troubled eyes. He wanted to testify his sympathy, yet dared not. If she had been poor Cicely, he could have done it, but the nameless prestige of high race was about her and tied his tongue. He knew nothing of the magnetism that tells us without words when a friendly heart is near, nor did Madge stop to ask herself why it suddenly seemed to her this man could help her in her sore strait. But he was from her own country. That alone was something. She asked him:

"Can you tell me of any respectable, quiet hotel at which I can stop—till—till I can hear from my friends?"

"Ah, your ladyship, if ye'll let the likes av me go wid yez, I'll take yez to a better place than a hotel for a lady—an illegant lodgin' wid a dacint widow."

"Yes, Terry. I will be thankful. I am in great trouble, as, of course, you see, and I know no one in London."

"Arrah, thin, if there's anythin' Terence McCarthy can do for yez, me lady, he'll do it, and say niver a word about it; and, me lady, don't you believe what that person said. There's many a one calls themself a wife who is not."

Lady Madge knew her own warm-hearted, impulsive race well, and there was more comfort in the knowledge that she had this humble friend than she had hoped for in her desolation.

Terry called a cab. Lady Madge entered it, and then he got on the box with the driver.

Once in the cab, the wretched girl gave way and wept bitterly. Ah, how dearly was she paying for for her ingratitude to her good father! How little she knew that this was but the beginning of her expiation!

She trusted entirely to this humble friend. She knew not what his idea of an "illigant lodgin" might be, but she wanted only shelter; that she would be thankful for—she, the tenderly nurtured Lady Madge!

The cab drew up before a gloomy-looking house in Mecklenburgh Square, and Terrence, jumping down from the box, put his head in the window and said:

"Excuse me, me lady, but London's a quare place. Perhaps yez'd like me to say Mrs. St John?"

"Oh, thank you! Thank you, Terry!" she said, appreciating the tact of the man. "Please say Miss Doyle. I don't want Captain St. John to know where I am."

Terry touched his hat and rang the bell and entered the house. He came out in a minute and threw open the cab door as if it had been an elegant landau equipage, and Lady Madge stepped out and into the house. The hall was wide and cheerful, with an air of substantial comfort, and she was received by the landlady, Mrs. Mooney, with a markedly respectful manner. Accustomed to that from her birth, she little guessed how different her reception would have been, unheralded by Terry; but he had given a glowing account of the splendors of the family to which she belonged, and she

so obviously a lady, that the plausible story was unquestioned.

Lady Madge, once her rooms were decided on, thanked Terry and offered him a sovereign, which the honest fellow took respectfully; and when he got outside he spat on it and put it in his pocket.

"Stay there for luck, or till she wants it. Maybe, if things is as I think, it won't be long."

Worn out with what she had gone through, Madge laid her aching head on the bed, but not to sleep. How could she sleep, this deluded girl, who

sleep. How could she sleep, this deluded girl, who was married, yet no wife? Oh, the horror of it! The disgrace! That thought swallowed up even her anger against the villain who had so deceived her. She blamed only herself. And the love she had had for him—could it all have died away in these few hours! Alas, it had been a romantic fancy, based on the imaginary virtues of her hero. Had he possessed them she would have loved always with all the ardor of a first passion; but he was not the man she loved, and the scales fell from her eyes. And she saw herself an outcast, a disgrace to her name. But Terry might have spoken truthfully. That girl might have asserted a claim to which she had no right.

The next day she wrote, as she had promised to do, to Laura; and instead of having to tell of the rapturous happiness of her honeymoon, her story was one of heartrending regret. Inclosed in this letter was one for her father, imploring his pardon, telling nothing of her grief, but promising, if only assured of his forgiveness, she would never vex him

by her presence, never recall herself to his memory—a most pathetic letter, that, had it reached its destination, had surely touched the father's heart.

Laura had promised to act as mediator and to let Madge know when her father should show signs of relenting, and the unfortunate girl now sent the letter to her care, asking her to choose the auspicious moment for presenting it.

The letter once sent, she had nothing to do but fold her hands and wait, and the four walls of her rooms became intolerable to her, with her weary thoughts; and the future held nothing for her-not a glimpse of hope. Her father's pardon she waited for, and if it came, what then? On one thing she was resolved-she would never drag her name in the dust. As Miss Doyle she would pass through the world without remark, and she would be Lady Margaret Doyle for no one. Her place should know her no more. She carefully muffled herself up, and with a gossamer veil drawn over her face, went into the park, choosing the secluded walks, where she was unlikely to meet with any one who might have known her in former days. But motion, activity of some kind, helped to wear away the time and was an antidote to her terrible mental distress, and thus she walked and walked, till ready to drop with fatigue.

Several days had elapsed, enough time for an answer to her letter, and none had come. Her father then would not forgive her. Almost crazed with the despair that filled her mind, she sallied

forth to walk resolutely to drown thought, caring not whither she went.

She drifted on, mechanically taking the direction of the park, until she reached the marble arch, from which several groups of equestrians were coming forth, for it was approaching the hour for luncheon, but she saw nothing; saw not her danger, even when a lady-rider, whose horse was evidently unmanageable, came madly toward her. She heard the cries of warning, but did not heed or think of them as connected with herself, till she suddenly felt her arm pulled violently, dragging her off her feet, and then a concussion, as of an immense mass thrown with frightful impetus against her, throwing her to the ground. She just remembered seeing a man's white face, with eyes full of agony bent over her, heard her name uttered in tones of wild distress, and knew no more.

The man who had dragged her from beneath the feet of the horse called in frenzied tones for a doctor, as he carried her in the park lodge, and there he clasped her little white hands and called her by every endeavoring epithet; for John Lorrimer loved this beautiful girl as a man loves only once in his life. To have longed for her, thought of her day and night for months, seen her face in everything and now have her before him, dead, may be! Fate was too cruel! But the doctor came and told him she was not dead, and perhaps but slightly injured, yet, that it was best to get her to some quiet place before she came to herself, as there might be internal injury or she might suffer

from the shock to her nervous system; he feared the latter. A cab was sent for, and then they were driven to the nearest hotel.

The doctor looked surprised as the address was given, and seeing the look, Lorrimer remarked, with some embarrassment, that the lady must be only visiting the city, as he knew her family lived out of town.

The doctor scented mystery, but said nothing. When they reached the hotel, restoratives were administered, and then the lovely violet eyes opened for a moment, looked vaguely at the doctor and chambermaid and then closed again. He then examined her more thoroughly than he had as yet been able to do; and, enjoining the chambermaid to remain till he sent a nurse, he rejoined Lorrimer below.

"How is she?" the latter asked anxiously.

"She is suffering from shock; all she needs, however, is absolute rest and quiet. I have an appointment which I must keep, therefore I must leave now, but I will return in a couple of hours. Meanwhile, can you hunt up a nurse?"

"Certainly!" said Lorrimer, who, if he could not be with Madge, was eager to do something in her service.

The doctor hastily wrote some addresses, handed them to him, and he started on his errand.

* * * * * *

Poor Lady Madge's evil fate had pursued her, even now that she was under the protection of the man who would have given his life for her. As she was being carried from the carriage to the hotel, her pale face, like a crushed lily, supported on Lorrimer's shoulder, her long, sunny hair like a shower of burnished gold sweeping over his sleeve and down to his knees, a gentleman, attracted by that golden gleam, stopped to look, muttering as he did so:

"An accident! Must be an awfully pretty woman with such hair!" Then he started, a glance of triumph lighted up his face as he looked on the pale countenance. "Madge, by all that's lucky!"

It was St. John, who, since her disappearance, had been seeking her everywhere vainly, and had been cursing his fate ever since and was even now on his way to see a detective about the matter, when here, in his very path, was his unhappy victim. She was just disappearing within the portals as he recognized her, and so absorbed was he in the joy of his discovery that he paid no attention to Lorrimer, whose back was toward him, believing that she must have been succored by strangers. He stood a moment irresolute. Should he go in at once and claim his wife? First he would learn what the accident was and then decide. He addressed the cabman.

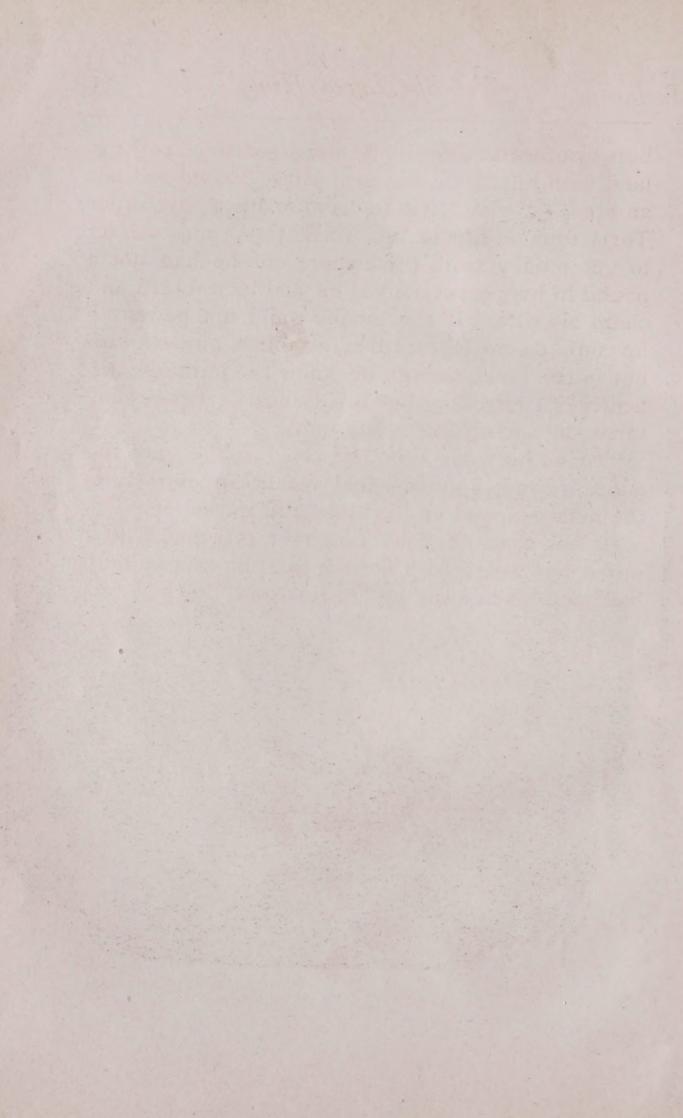
"I think that lady is a friend of mine. Is she much hurt?" he asked.

"Don't think so, sir. She was knocked down by a runaway 'oss. She's pretty bad, but no bones broke, I 'eard the doctor say."

St. John thought rapidly. If he took her away right now, he would have to take her to his cham-



SHE FELT HER ARM PULLED VIOLENTLY.—See Page 30.

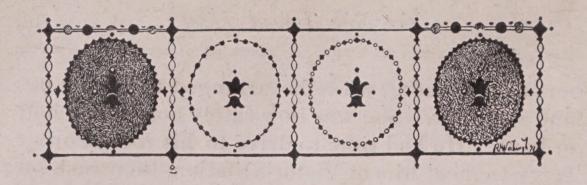


bers or elsewhere, while he arranged to leave England with her. She was now safely housed for half an hour. He had time to drive to his rooms, order Terry to meet him at Victoria Station, then rush off to get money from somewhere, for he had not a pound in his pocket, and if he had luck return and claim his wife. If the money could not be raised, he could do no better than establish himself with her in the hotel, though he knew the immense difficulty of controlling her in any hotel. His resolve taken, he sprang into a hansom.

"Drive for your life!" he cried, as he gave the address; and, knowing that meant an extra fare, the man whipped up his horse and rattled off.

In less than an hour Lorrimer returned with a nurse, and heard with despair that the injured lady had been taken away by her husband.





CHAPTER IV.

St. John had left his chambers in terrible anxiety. The advent of poor, ill-used Cicely was decidedly inconvenient. He hated scenes, and knew he had one to encounter; and, besides, to rid himself of her he had to run a fearful risk.

He overtook her at Regent's Circus and, refusing to notice her tearstained, passionate face, he hailed a cab and, hurrying her into it, he followed her, and said briefly and sternly:

"Where are you staying?"

"At my old lodgings. Not a very fit place for Captain St. John's wife, but I can't choose. I have little money, and was not sure you were in England."

"Why the devil did you come after me? I told you never to do it! What if my uncle had been there?"

(Captain St. John's uncle was a relative invented expressly for Cicely.)

"Look here, Larry, I won't stand this any longer! I'm your wife, and I'm going to have people know it!"

She turned her brilliant eyes—sometimes so tender for this man, now full of fierce anger—upon him.

"You 've fooled me long enough," she continued. "You have been so mightily afraid that I should turn up at the wrong time that you left me in America, and I believe now you meant to desert me, but I will not be treated so, and hold my tongue, so I came home, but even then I did not want to interfere with your plans. I wrote you yesterday I had come, and you neither answered nor came, so I went to your rooms to see about you."

St. John remembered now his unopened letters, and cursed his folly in neglecting them. But he well knew his power over the passionate, uncontrolled nature of the woman beside him, and resolved to resort to blandishments to appease her.

"Yes, but you might have made an infernal mess of matters! However, as it happens, it's all right!"

"Yes," she said, with suppressed anger, "it may be for you, but who is that other woman you have there, where I ought to be?"

Her eyes flashed angrily as she asked the question.

"Ah! Are you jealous, little Cicely?" he asked, in the old caressing tone she knew so well, and which had always such power over her. "Well, I will tell you who that is—she is a lady of rank whom my uncle has brought to town, and she is resting while he is away."

"Your uncle brought her? Why, the man said

she was a young lady. Do young ladies go about so?" she asked.

"Oh, she is my uncle's ward," said Lawrence, lying glibly, "and very rich, and as ugly as sin, and he wishes me to marry her. Don't be silly!" he said, as she started. "Do you think if she had had any interest for me I should have been out when you came? The fact is, I have given up my chambers to her use."

Cicely knew too little of the habits of people in good society to see the discrepancies of his statement, and knowing this, he had dared make it. With a sigh, she accepted it, and thrilled with delight when he said:

"After all, dear, it is good to have you here, right in London, where I can see you as often as I want."

"Is it, Lawrence? Do you really mean it?"

"I do. I was awfully sorry not to get back to New York, as I promised. We used to have our little disagreements, but I'm sobering down now, and I've missed you awfully, you know, lately." His treacherous arm went round her waist as he spoke. "You haven't kissed me yet, Cicely." And poor Cicely turned, with eyes full of glad tears, to kiss the villain, who was caressing her into security in order to compass her destruction.

Before long the driver turned into the Belgrave

road, Pimlico, and St. John said:

"I haven't dined. Suppose we order some supper to be sent to your lodgings?"

Cicely was delighted. She was fond of good cheer, and then to have it with her husband was a

great treat. They stopped at one of the numerous shops devoted to shell-fish and ordered lobstersalad, at a grocer's for champagne and then at a famous caterer's for a pheasant and all the other etceteras to an excellent supper. Cicely lodged in a quiet street, just off Victoria Station, and in a short time husband and wife were seated gayly at the well-spread table. Cicely had partaken freely of the salad and champagne, and was very lively. When St. John saw that she was thoroughly reassured, he said:

"Now, dearest, I am going to make you thoroughly ashamed of yourself. You accuse me of forgetting you, when in truth I have thought of you, and had a present which I was keeping to give you when I should see you."

He took from his pocket, as he spoke, a little box -not an ordinary jeweler's box, which betrays its contents at once—but one of strangely carved

wood.

Cicely's eyes glistened with curiosity.

"Now drink up your wine, and I will show it

you."

Cicely drank her glass of champagne, which St. John had filled much oftener than she guessed, and then turned eagerly to him.

He opened the box and kept it in his hand, while she uttered a low cry of admiration on seeing the ring.

"How beautiful! Is that for me? Oh, you do

love your poor Cicely, after all!"

"Of course I do. Now this is far too valuable a

thing to be knocking about in this sort of a house. Where will you keep it?"

"In my desk."

"Let me see it. The lock may not be safe."

Cicely got her desk and opened it on the table. She was excited, happy and, it must be confessed, a good deal the worse for the wine he had taken.

"What have you in that? All your treasure?" he asked carelessly, but his eyes dived eagerly into it; he was looking for something among those papers. "Any love letters, eh? he asked, fumbling among them.

"No, there is nothing important, but it is the safest place for the ring. I can lock the desk in my trunk."

"Nothing important, eh? Well, there is one thing very important that for your own sake you ought to have in a safe place: Your marriage certificate."

She looked startled; she was dazed by the wine, but she remembered how often he had tried to get that from her, and how she had clung to it; for a moment the allusion to it almost sobered her.

"I—I—lost it," she stammered.

"Lost it! How?" he asked the question eagerly.

"I fear I must have destroyed it in mistake for another paper. I think so." Oh, Lawrence, you won't take advantage of that to deny our marriage, will you?"

"I? Nonsense, of course not! I always knew you were too careless, and wished to take care of it for you. Never mind, we can get a copy. Look!

You have only seen the beauty, not the wonders of your ring."

He still had it in his hand. He held it toward her, and said:

"Look, the tongue springs out, and gives a tiny sting on pressing this diamond."

Cicely took the deadly bauble in her hand and laughed with delight at the trick.

"Will it really sting?"

"Just a prick, enough to carry out the idea. Do you want to be stung?"

She held her hand, and he put the tiny emerald head between her two fingers where the skin was tender, and pressed both the diamonds.

Cicely uttered a startled little cry:

"Indeed it does! Just like a leech," she said. "What a horrible idea." She gave a little shudder, and took the terrible ring and placed it on her finger.

"Take care of it, Cicely," he said, as she looked at it with delighted eyes—she had never yet had anything so valuable.

St. John sat with his wife for some time longer, then rose to go, telling Cicely directly his uncle was out of town he would find a nice little home for her, and they would live as happily as two birds. He dared not stay to-night, for he had an appointment with his exacting relative, and Cicely let him depart with a sigh and a kiss and a promise from him that he would see her next day.

Next day! What was next day to be for that unhappy girl?

When St. John left it was eight o'clock. He got into a hansom cab and drove back to his chambers. Madge might be impatient, and his policy was clearly to conciliate her. It was of no use to kill the goose with the golden eggs. He looked at his watch.

"If that old fellow did not deceive me, it will occur within twelve hours, and all will be over tomorrow at this hour, and that nightmare gone.

Lawrence St. John heard with angry amazement of Madge's departure. She gone, his hopes of her money went, too. He determined to find her, and at once set every agency to work to do so. Once found, he knew his power over women, and did not doubt he could persuade Madge into believing him when he told her that what she had heard represented an early entanglement, and that when he married her he was free, and that he would thus induce her to live with him. His own idea was that, ashamed to go back to her father, she had gone to Dublin, where she had many friends.

It was with terrible reluctance St. John forced himself to go to Cicely's lodgings next night and to ask for Mrs. Varley, the name by which both were known.

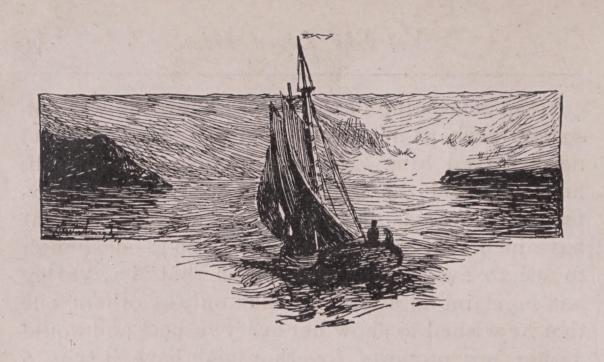
He was told she was dead, and feigned to be paralyzed with horror when he heard it. She had died very suddenly of heart disease, and had made a request that all her belongings might be sent to her sister in the country, whose address she had given to the landlady.

She had not asked for him. For one moment the callous heart smote him. He knew then she had

guessed something of the truth—knew she was poisoned—perhaps not the manner of it—but she had not betrayed him. He quickly recovered himself, however, told the landlady he would pay all expenses of funeral, doctor and any outlay she might have incurred. He begged her to be good enough to see to everything, and hinted that Mrs. Varley had no claim on him more than on any others, but that he wished to show her every respect and would gather her property together and have it sent to her sister. He was so free with small cash that he won golden opinions in the house, and then went back to his own world, unsuspected, but far from at ease; for in the search he had made the serpent ring was nowhere to be found!

As days went on, other matters began to make him uneasy, too. Madge was yet unfound. Lord Ferrars was very ill, the papers said, and strange rumors were afloat about Miss Perceval. And then, as he was cursing his ill-luck, and almost believing that the stake he had played for was lost, he had seen that crowd in the street, had been attracted by a wealth of golden hair and found, right there, in his power, Lady Madge!

As we have seen, to use that power, to get her once more into his possession, was the work of a very short time; and now he determined he would never lose her again, even if he had to keep her by force.



CHAPTER V.

John Lorrimer was a young American, who was visiting Lord Ferrars at the same time as St. John They had known each other slightly before going to Ballyreen, and Lorrimer knew he was no fit man to be near Lady Margaret, and before many weeks had passed that knowledge had become agony to He loved the beautiful girl, and saw that the specious villain was winning the heart he would have given his life to gain. And he could do nothing! Honor forbade him to warn Lord Ferrars; and, unable to bear the pain of seeing the sweet wild bird he adored falling a prey to her ensnarer, he left, but not before he had ventured to speak to Laura Perceval of St. John's schemes. She, however, laughed at his fears and assured him Lady Madge was in no danger whatever.

He could do no more, and was forced to go away, knowing he was leaving the woman he loved in danger. He went to London, tried to forget her, and imagined he was getting over his folly. Nevertheless, he searched the society papers diligently for any chance of seeing her name; and when months went by, and he heard of St. John as being with his regiment at the Curragh of Kildare, of Lord Ferrars being at Melford and Lady Margaret Doyle being at the Exeter Hunt ball, he began to hope Laura Perceval had been right and that he had feared unnecessarily; and then he allowed a wild hope to take possession of him: If she did not love St. John, he might win her! His family was one of the oldest in America, and his wealth very great; he might hope then Lord Ferrars would give his daughter to him, if he only could make her love him. And he was preparing to go to Exeter, to be, at least, near her, when there came a whisper in the clubs that Lord Ferrars's beautiful heiress had left her home-some said eloped, others that she had secretly married Captain St. John. Actual truth no one seemed to know; and beyond the fact that she had really left her father's house suddenly and that Lord Ferrars was ill in consequence, he could by most diligent inquiry learn nothing.

He resolved then to go to Exeter, from which Melford was but a few miles distant, and see for himself. He knew now that the love he believed he had crushed was a giant he could never lay. Without Lady Madge his life would be a burden, but at least he could consecrate it to her; well he

knew if she had indeed married St. John and offended her father, her days would be full of trouble; she might need a friend, and for this he must know more about her. And then the very day he had resolved to start for Devonshire, he saw her about to enter the park—alone, unaccompanied, she who never had moved without attendance! What could it mean? And then barely had his mind conceived the question, than he saw her deadly peril; he had been hastening toward her, but the park railings yet intervened, and that horse was plunging forward; another moment and it would be over her, crushing her to death! How he rescued her the reader already knows.

What a whirlwind of hopes and fears ran through his brain as he hastened for the nurse; he began to suspect she was in dire trouble. The hopeless look in her face, her perfect oblivion of surroundings which led to the accident, all pointed to some unknown calamity; it was not the face of a happy bride.

If she was in trouble she should at least have a friend; he would consecrate his life to her and be to her as a brother. It was a delight to him now to think she would depend on him, even for a few days. And then, when full of tender concern for his love's condition, he reached the hotel and found her gone, his heart sank. Her husband? Then she was married, and he had no right to think her unhappy, and yet, and yet, hers was not the radiant face of a happy wife! He dismissed the nurse, left a message for the doctor, and then, scarce master of

himself, he left. She was married, that was now certainty, and he was disgusted with life, with everything. He hated England now. He looked at his watch; it was not three, he might catch the tidal train for the continent yet. He drove to his lodgings and, packing hastily, started for Paris.

Meanwhile the unhappy girl had fallen into the clutches of her worst enemy. St. John had found, on entering the room in the hotel, that she was still in a stupor. Telling the chambermaid he was her husband, he wrapped her in a shawl and carried her down to the cab he had in waiting, and then drove with her to Victoria Station, where Terry had been ordered to meet him. He had taken a stateroom in the Pullman car and had provided himself with chloroform in case Lady Madge should resist going with him. He wanted to avoid any scandal, but it seemed as if force would not be necessary, for Madge was still unconscious when he reached the station. There he found Terry, to whom he had told nothing more than that he was going to Paris. Of Madge, not a word. And when the honest fellow was summoned to the cab and saw whom he was to assist out, he felt much inclined to refuse; but to do that was to leave the helpless girl without one friend, and he might yet be able to help her. Just as St. John was bending over her to carry her out of the cab the great eyes opened and Madge saw her husband. A look of terror came into her eyes and she began to struggle; but St. John was ready. A small sponge hidden in his handkerchief was pressed to her nostrils, under pretense to Terry of reviving her, and she was again quiet. He carried her then to the Pullman car, followed by many sympathizing eyes, for the poor lady seemed so very sick to travel. Among those eyes was one pair, however, which followed the couple with astonishment, then hastened after them.

Could fate have led him here? John Lorrimer asked himself as he saw St. John enter the Pullman car with Madge, followed by Terry, bearing rugs, umbrellas and hat-boxes. It was not starting-time for half an hour, and Lorrimer determined to wait till the last minute before getting into the car himself. He must know more. What could impel St. John to take Lady Madge away in her present condition? It seemed brutal, cruel. He saw Terry get out of the Pullman to take his place in the ordinary cab and decided to speak to him.

"That lady seems very ill?" he said.

"And indade she is, worse luck!" said Terry, heaving a great sigh.

"I am deeply interested, for I believe I once knew her."

Terry looked eagerly at him. He was almost afraid to confide in a stranger, and yet who could be worse than St. John?

"Are you her friend?" he asked eagerly.

"Indeed I am. Does she need one?"

The earnest, eager tone spoke volumes.

"That she does, if ever a woman did. An' if she was in her sinses she'd die rather than go with that man."

Lorrimer stopped to make no inquiries then. She was in danger—needed him. That was enough. His thoughts worked rapidly.

"Can I count on you?" he asked Terry.

"That ye can, sir."

"Could you manage to get Captain St. John's pocketbook, purse, or any important thing from his pocket, then ask something that would make him discover his loss, do you think? You see, I only want to get him away for a few minutes. You can drop it on the floor so that you may run no risk yourself, for if my plan succeeds he will seek and find it."

Terry looked troubled. It was a stupendous thing to do; but he was very smart and very tender-hearted. Could he let the sweet lady go to a life of misery if he could prevent? No! No!

"I'll try, sir."

"Bravo! Then we are all right, I hope."

Without an unnecessary word, Terry returned to the Pullman car, pretending he had forgotten something, and found, luckily, that having disposed Lady Madge in her stateroom, in which the bed was made up, Captain St. John was washing himself in the toilet-room, for he had been rushing about and felt the need of ablution. His coat was off, and directly Terry appeared he directed him to brush it, and, of course, the valet seized the opportunity. When he handed the coat to his master the pocketbook was gone.

"Shall I get you the evening papers, sir?"

"Yes; and, by the by, I haven't a cigar."

He felt for his pocketbook to give the money, and discovered his loss.

He searched every pocket, looked on the ground where the coat had been lying, and then, with a terrible oath, he dashed out of the car, calling, as he went, to Terry to lock the stateroom door.

Lorrimer was on the watch, and said to the conductor that the gentleman had discovered a serious loss and must defer his journey, and had directed him to remove the lady. His statement passed unquestioned when the conductor saw him speak to Terry in an authoritative manner. Once in the car, Lorrimer said to Terry:

"Now, when I have got to the cab, you run after St. John with the pocketbook. He will be hunting about the station. Say you picked it up the minute after he left the car, and that will clear you for losing sight of the lady."

Five minutes later Lady Madge was safe in a cab with the man who loved her so well. He drove direct to the house of the doctor who had seen her after the accident—Doctor Watts—to whom he stated as much of the facts as he knew, believing he would be discreet and that mystery might be injudicious.

The good doctor entered into the situation; had her put to bed in his house; installed his housekeeper as nurse, telling Lorrimer there was scarcely a hope of her coming out of her present stupor except in a high fever. And he was right. There ensued many days of delirium, and from what the doctor told him of it, he feared the worst. She was an unhappy wife, if wife at all, for she at times spoke of being disgraced-deluded. Could it be that she had left home, seen her error when too late to avert scandal, yet not too late to be saved from marriage? His heart leaped at the thought, but he dared not entertain it; she must be lost to him. At last the fever had run its course. She was conscious, but too weak it seemed to be anxious about herself; but there came a day when her interest in life returned, and she begged a messenger might be sent to Mecklenburg Square for letters for Miss Doyle. And the doctor, fearing to fret would injure her more than any news, allowed it, and Lorrimer himself went to the address, explained the accident, thus accounting for her sudden absence, and learned that several trunks had arrived for Miss Doyle, and a letter.

When Lorrimer heard that she was known only as Miss Doyle his perplexity was increased, but he asked no questions till she should herself explain.

Madge eagerly took the letter when the nurse brought it to her, but her face fell when she saw there was but one, and that from Laura, not from her father. She opened it and read it, her weak hands trembling as she did so. Alas, there was no comfort in it! Laura told her her father would not as yet hear her name mentioned, and that he had torn her letter across, unread, and thrown it on the fire.

[&]quot;But courage, dearest. I am working for you, ready to seize the favorable moment. Send your letters for your father through me. Time works wonders, and all will soon be right for you.

He is now too angry to listen to reason. He insists on my retaining my position, saying the house needs a lady, and for your sake, darling Madge, I stay."

This letter, as the doctor feared, threw Madge back again; but youth conquered, and the day so wearily waited for by Lorrimer came at last and she was able to be brought into the sitting-room, where, propped by pillows, Lorrimer at last saw her; so terribly changed that he could hardly believe six short months before she had seemed almost a child. His voice was broken by emotion as he took the thin little hand and saw the sweet, sad smile as she thanked him for all he had done.

"You saved my life, Mr. Lorrimer."

"Scarcely that, perhaps, but I am only thankful I was near to do anything."

She gained strength slowly after this, and as soon as possible returned to the lodgings from which she had seemed so mysteriouly to disappear; and Lorrimer, in his determination to watch over her, took lodgings on the other side the square, and from his window could see all who entered the house. He made a daily short visit on the plea of inquiring for her health, but the past was never alluded to between them, and he was as utterly in the dark as ever.

She had written to Laura, and had answers entreating her still to have patience; that she might jeopardize everything by precipitation, and that she would warn her when she saw sign of relenting; and thus she was fain to possess her restless soul in patience. But she was now able to go out, and

the stronger she grew the more difficult did writing seem.

One day, just after receiving a soothing letter from Laura, she picked up an old newspaper that had been dropped in the hall, and her eye fell on her father's name:

"Lord Ferrars is recovering .rom his dangerous illness, and is now convalescent at Melford."

Her father ill, and Laura did not tell her? The paper was a fortnight old. How strange it was! Yet, perhaps she had feared to add to her remorse. Yes, that must be it! But, oh, she must see him, she *must*, if only at a distance! One humble friend she had at Melford, a former nurse, who would shelter her and keep her presence a secret. To her she resolved to go.





CHAPTER VI.

Terry must have been a born actor, as so many of his countrymen are. He carried out his part of the programme admirably. He rushed along the platform and out of the gate, waving the pocket-book over his head. Many officious people were there to show him exactly where the gentleman was, who was so frantically seeking his portemonnaie, but Terry wanted, while appearing to hasten, to gain time, and he rushed out of one room into another, and, at last, having made the tour of the station, reached St. John, waving the pocketbook triumphantly. The latter gave a great cry of relief as he saw him approach.

"Where did you find it?" he asked, snatching it out of his hand.

"On the flure av the car, just as I went to lock the door," panted Terry, wiping his brow.

"Did you lock the door?" asked Captain St. John. Terry clapped his hand to his forehead.

"Be jabbers! Did I? Be me sowl I can't tell [52]

you, sir, I was in such a hurry when I saw it to rush after you. I—"

"Idiot!" exclaimed the grateful captain, as he rushed once more back to the Pullman—telling himself as he did so, however, his fear must be groundless, for even if Madge had come out of her stupor in the few minutes that had elapsed since he left the car, she would not have been strong enough to leave it. He sped along, nevertheless, and reached the stateroom to find Lady Madge gone!

He started back, almost unable to believe his eyes, but search through the car proved useless.

No thought of a plot or collusion entered his mind; he believed Madge had recognized him, and only feigned to be overcome with the chloroform, and the moment she had found herself alone she had taken the opportunity to leave the car. She had, of course, been in her walking-clothes still, and would present no peculiar appearance to attract attention beyond a pallor which, however unnatural in her vivid face, might not strike a casual observer, and her loose, long hair, which no doubt she would hide. She could not be gone far, for a quarter of an hour only had elapsed since he went in search of his lost book.

He stood a moment. The Brighton train was just in, crowds of people on the platform and every cab off the stand. So, if she had taken a cab there were no onlooking cabmen to ask. He questioned one or two porters, who, however, passed hurriedly on, so busy were they, merely giving a curt "No" over their shoulders to his inquiries as to whether

they had observed a pale lady with golden hair much disheveled. It was no use. He was losing precious time here. He called Terry, told him to take care of his property, wait till the crowd had cleared and the officials were more at liberty, and then to make diligent inquiry of every one who might have seen Lady Madge.

Terry promised, and was thankful St. John had not thought of the Pullman conductor, who might have given information that would have set him on

the right track.

St. John's search was fruitless. He set every engine in motion to discover her whereabouts in vain. He was in great fear that her father should discover she was not with him, which might lead to her recall home and himself being discarded by her. He might fool Madge with a story of Cicely being no wife of his. He could not hope to so deceive Lord Ferrars.

Lady Madge, with her father as protector, was a very different person from the ignorant, friendless girl he believed her to be. Therefore, all his efforts to find her had to be made secretly. Advertise he dared not. He was getting very uneasy on other points, too. Reports of Lord Ferrars's illness took an alarming turn. Of Laura Perceval's boundless influence over him there seemed no doubt. And then came one that startled him completely. It was said Lord Ferrars was going to marry Miss Perceval.

"By Jove! If she marries him, I'm done for! And she's just the very woman to do it! What a

confounded fool I have been! That 's been her game! That 's why she played into my hands! What an idiot I was to believe blood is thicker than water with a woman like Laura! And that just for what she would gain as my half-sister, I being rich. She has worked for me. I must act. I'll run down and see her. I wonder if I couldn't get some inside knowledge of the old man's doings. If I only knew how that will stands. Yes, I must see her; but she shall not know I suspect her. And she, too, will know where Madge is. I must, at any rate, keep friends with her, treacherous as she is. My turn will come."

He acted quickly. He bade Terry keep a sharp lookout for Lady Margaret, believing she might come or send while he was away from town. He believed so entirely in her love that, even after all that had passed, he thought her woman's heart would bring her back to him, when her temporary jealousy was over. If he could only have had her to himself long enough to make the glib explanation he had to offer her, he felt sure she would never have had courage to leave him.

St. John well knew the neigborhood of Melford. He put up at Exeter, and on pretext of sketching the fine old hall, he hung about the grounds, taking care that Lord Ferrars should not see him; but of that there was little risk, as he soon found, for he was recovering from a severe stroke of paralysis, and only drove or walked at stated times, which he could easily avoid, for he managed to learn the habits of the inmates well. Exeter was only three

miles from Melford Hall, and he stayed there several days and heard all the gossip, and learned more of the ins and outs of the house than would otherwise have been possible, before he sought that interview he had determined on with Laura.





CHAPTER VII.

Mary Holmes, the old nurse to whom Madge decided to go and learn her father's true state, and perhaps steal a look at his dear face, was sitting in her cottage, within sight of the gables of Melford, thinking of her lost darling and on the wickedness of Laura Perceval, of whom all the servants at the hall were talking. She was wishing she could warn her, and beg her to return, when the door opened, and Lady Madge stood before her; but not till that elderly bonnet and gray veil were thrown off, did Nurse Holmes recognize her.

"Lady Madge!" she cried. "Heaven be praised!" Then with a pitiful voice: "Oh, my poor, poor, dear lady!"

She started forward to take her nursling in her arms; her last words were a significant comment on her changed looks. The tears were in the nurse's eyes. How different was this careworn girl from the radiant, petted one she had last seen!

"Hush, nurse dear! No one must know I am here; but I felt I could not live without seeing my

father. If I find all well with him I will go away and wait till he consents to pardon me."

"Indeed, then, my lady, you'll not find him well. He's a broken-hearted gentleman ever since he's been here."

"But why, oh, why is he so hard that he will not forgive or see me?" cried Madge, in an agony of sorrow.

"Have you asked him, miss?" asked Mary, anxiously.

"I have, indeed. I've spared no effort to soften him toward me."

"Lady Madge, dear, you just go yourself and see your father. I don't believe there needs any one to speak between you and my lord; and don't trust to Miss Perceval, that's my advice."

"Dear nurse, you never liked her, but you may be right. I will see him, but to-night I will rest; for should he still prove hard and unforgiving I could better bear it to-morrow. *Then* I will find courage to risk all his anger and see him."

At that same hour of dusk Lawrence St. John and Laura Perceval were walking up and down an avenue of dense trees, and she was endeavoring to reassure him as to her intentions.

"But this new will they talk of? Do you know what it is?" asked Lawrence.

"No; I don't believe anything about it. I must have known, and you must be sure your interest is mine. This report about my trying to marry him is too absurd to contradict. He is a dying man and, as you are my brother, it is natural that I should

wish you to inherit rather than a stranger, as Gerald is, for your good must be my good."

"Of course, of course," said her half-brother. "You keep faith with me, Laura, and I will make your fortune."

And then, fearful of being seen, Laura returned to the house and Lawrence turned to leave the grounds, but a thought struck him, and he turned back toward the house. He would wait till dark and then see for himself how Lord Ferrars looked. On mild nights he always sat in his library with the lights burning and blinds open. If he looked ill, he might trust Laura; a sick man would be little inclined for marriage, as she had said.

* * * * * * *

Lady Madge sadly needed rest and sleep, but although she went up to the little room assigned her and her nurse helped her to undress, neither came to her; agitating thoughts of her old home so near, of her father and what she had heard kept sleep from her eyes. It was barely seven o'clock when she retired, but she knew Mary's own hour for retiring was not much later. She lay and tossed till the stable clock of Melford struck the half-hour after eight. The tears rushed to her eyes at that well-remembered sound, and she remembered the Hall was visible from the room she was in. She got up, threw open the window. Yes, there in the moonlight stood the beautiful home of her childhood; it stood high, and she could see every window on the side nearest to her. There was light in the library, and in fancy she saw her dear father sitting there in his loneliness, perhaps yearning for her, as she yearned for him. A soft, irresistible impulse came over her to see his dear face this night before she slept. He would be sitting, she believed, as his custom was, with curtains undrawn, shutters unclosed. She would steal into the grounds, and so gaze on him while he knew it not.

She quickly dressed. Wrapping herself in her large gray cloak she went softly down the stairs and out into the fragrant night air. A few minutes' walking brought her to the grounds of Melford Hall. She entered by a private gate that led to the shrubbery. As she stepped swiftly and quietly along, she took no note of her surroundings, and thus she saw not a man, who turned into a path away from the house as she came up. The man started, stood back in the shrubbery, then when she had passed, stole softly after her.

Madge's heart beat rapidly as she drew near the well-remembered terrace, and when she found herself in front of the library window, from which the cheerful light streamed out and mingled with the moonbeams, she put her hand before her eyes for a moment, before daring to look at the window; then, with quick impatience, she gazed within, and as she gazed the tears came welling up. Yes, there was her father; but ah, so changed! They had not deceived her, who said he was broken and aged. He looked seventy. How long she stood and looked she knew not, so absorbed was she.

As she looked upon him, the resolution grew upon her to go in then to her father and throw herself at his feet, but she stayed yet awhile to gaze her fill at that dear, drawn face, in case he cast her off even now. Her eyes blinded by tears, she watched him lay down the pen, with which he had been idling rather than writing, although the table was covered with papers, and lying back in his chair his eyelids closed, and like a tired child he slept.

Madge seated herself on the stone base of one of the pillars to wait until he should rouse. He looked so sadly feeble, she feared her sudden entrance might even be too much for him. As she sat thus with the honeysuckle that climbed round the pillar caressing her hair, memory recalled the many happy nights she had come out after dinner and sat on the very spot. What a different creature was she now, from the happy, lighthearted girl who had sat there but a few short months ago. As her thoughts thus went back, her eyes were fixed on her father. Suddenly their expression changed from love to astonishment, then terror. As her father lay dozing, a figure had glided from behind the heavy curtains that screened a door at the end of the room. The figure came softly to the table, glanced eagerly over it, then took up a long blue document that lay there. Half unconsciously Madge read in large legal text the words:

"Last Will and Testament."

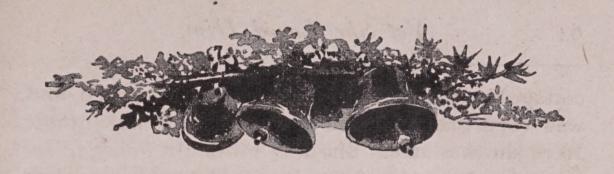
She rose giddily and mechanically prepared to descend the steps. She turned once to look into the room she might never see again. Gone was all

intention of throwing herself at her father's feet and imploring pardon. The shadow of crime came between them now.

As she thus took her last look a sudden shriek burst from her lips on the still night air. She ran forward a few steps with arms extended, then reeled, swayed and would have fallen to the ground but for the strong arm of a man outstretched to save her.

Above her shriek was heard another cry, so awful, so full of agony, that naught but death could wring from mortal lips!





CHAPTER VIII.

The man who had seen Lady Madge pass in the shrubbery was John Lorrimer. Living opposite her, he watched her movements, not with a spy's hateful purpose, but with a tender, protecting instinct. He had no right openly to espouse her cause or help her in her trouble, but he dreaded for her he knew not what—some desperate road out of the trouble she was in, perhaps! At all events he followed her outgoings, and did not rest till he saw her safely housed; and thus this time, when she went forth from Mecklenburgh Square, cloaked and veiled, something about her or some subtle instinct in himself told him she was going on a journey. To seize his hat and follow her to the station, to take a ticket and go on the same train, and then to keep her in view without being seen, required a series of clever maneuvers of which a French agent of police might have been proud.

He knew nothing of Melford, but he watched her into her nurse's cottage, and then, going into a roadside inn near, got some refreshment, much needed, and learned, by guarded questions, all the gossip of the neighborhood, and who occupied the

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cottage in which Lady Madge was sheltered, and was very glad to learn it was that of her nurse. Here she was safe. She was no doubt going to return, implore her father's pardon, and take her place at home once more. His errand had apparently ended, yet he had heard of Miss Perceval's supposed power and her motives. Might it not be possible that her evil counsel would prevail, and the father prove pitiless? And then, driven forth from the home she had abandoned, what might not the unhappy girl do? John Lorrimer's great heart swelled as he pictured her suffering. How tenderly and hopelessly he loved this girl, who had believed she had not a friend in the world! Determined to be at hand if she needed him, knowing no train returned to London that night, he sat at the window of the inn, thinking of this great love of his, and how it absorbed his life, when he started as if shot! A man passed along the road. It was getting dusk, but surely he could not be mistaken in that gait! It must be Lawrence St. John! If so, what could it portend but mischief to the girl whose evil genius he had been! He followed him at a distance, saw him enter the grounds, make a signal, and then that he was joined by Miss Perceval. Now he knew there must be something brewing against the peace of the woman he loved, and unfamiliar as he was with the grounds, he yet found means of being present at that interview, and within earshot some of the time, and thus he was armed with some valuable knowledge; but what he would have been most thankful to know escaped him.

He saw Laura return to the house, and then St. John turn to go out, and then alter his plan and return, and linger about it, keeping carefully out of sight, and then, when the servant entered the library with lights, and Lord Ferrars could be seen safely at dinner in the dining room, he saw him go up the terrace steps and enter the library; and after trying the drawers of the writing-table and seeking something everywhere, he hid himself behind the curtains.

At this point Lorrimer was sadly perplexed. That St. John was there for some nefarious purpose he knew—could even guess what it might be—but how could he act? Should he give an alarm? What would Madge wish? He walked, in his perturbation, toward the shrubberies, and had just decided to return, see Lord Ferrars, and tell him what he he had seen, when he saw Madge approaching, just in time to conceal himself.

She was going to see her father, of course, and now might need a watchful friend, perhaps. All thought of Lord Ferrars, the probable larceny contemplated by St. John—everything—vanished at the sight of the woman he loved; his thoughts were filled only with her. He followed, and saw her reach the terrace, saw that Lord Ferrars had entered the room and was already occupied with his papers, and then he retired a short distance and seated himself on a sheltered seat on the lawn, where he could see Madge leave, if she did so yet not be intruding on the sacredness of an interview.

He could not, from where he now was, see the

terrace. As time elapsed, he concluded she must be with her father; but after some time he saw her, with a terrible look of woe, run forward, her face ghastly in the moonlight, and then her scream rang out, mingled with that other cry, which, while it curdled the blood in his veins, he yet did not heed in the wild bound he made, just in time to prevent her fall; for, seeing her in her dire distress, he had followed the cherishing instinct of his love, and extended his arms to receive her, as he did, in a swoon.

"Poor little one! She has made her appeal in vain. I did not expect that, my darling. But now how to get her away from this inhospitable house!"

He was a very strong man, and she but a slender girl. He carried her as if she were a mere baby, taking his way through the private path by which they had entered. Then, remembering the nurse, he made for her cottage.

He was sure she was the only one to whom Lady Madge had intrusted the secret of her coming here. Surely he might ask for succor and rest for her!

As he carried his precious burden he remembered how often he had dreamed of holding her thus in his arms, her heart beating to his, and gone into secret raptures over the dream, knowing it could never be more; and now that dream was realized, but how sadly! Every fiber of his heart thrilled with sympathy for her trouble, and he would have given his right hand to save her a harsh word.

When he reached the gate he stopped a minute to rest and to gaze, unrestrained, on the face he loved so well. As he looked on those dear features, to which the pale moon was lending a marble purity, his great heart swelled with love, pity and regret. All the repressed passion of his nature surged within him, and the impulse to kiss the sweet lips for once was well-nigh irresistible. He almost yielded to the intoxicating thought. Such bliss to him! So harmless to her! And then all that was good and manly in him warned him to respect her helplessness, and he resumed his way, ashamed of the mad impulse.

Great was Mrs. Holmes's astonishment and fear to see her dear young lady carried in by a strange gentleman, and it was some time before he could make her understand how it all happened. She had believed Lady Madge to be in her room, but when he did make it clear, giving what he believed to be a correct version—that Madge had presented herself to her father and been driven off with such contumely as to make her desperate, and, overcome by wounded love and her despair, she had fainted—when Nurse Mary heard this, many were her indignant ejaculations about her "poor, ill-treated lamb."

When John Lorrimer had seen her open her eyes, he withdrew, thinking she might be offended at finding him there.

Madge gazed around her wonderingly until her eyes fell on her old nurse; then she seemed to remember all, and was seized with a shuddering fit, and, burying her head in the pillow, she wept convulsively; and Mary, knowing she was best left alone, left the room to tell Mr. Lorrimer.

"That's right, I suppose" he said. "They say tears relieve a woman. Poor, poor girl! I am staying at the Crown, and will come in the morning to see what I can do."

Mary Holmes wondered who this kind young gentleman could be. At first she had supposed he was staying at the Hall, but as he said he was at the Crown, he seemed to be a stranger.

When she returned to Madge, she found her sitting on the bed looking almost wild with grief.

"How is my father? Oh, Mary, tell me! How is my darling father?"

Mary looked bewildered.

"And didn't you see him, dearie? I've heard nothing since you came, and I'm sure, although he is my lord and I've worked for him and his, ever since I was a child, whatever happens now serves him right, to treat his own flesh and blood so. Oh, but that Jezebel must have got the right side of him nicely!"

"Mary, for pity's sake don't speak so of my father—my dear, dear father! Send at once and see how he is. Oh, Mary! My good Mary, I am so anxious!"

"But, my dear young lady!" said the bewildered woman, now quite sure trouble had turned Madge's brain; then, seeing her wild, imploring look, she hastened to add: "Yes, yes! I will wake Jane, and she shall go."

And anxious to appease her, and thinking in case of emergency it would be well if Jennie, her niece, were up, she woke her, telling her to dress at once.

As she was returning to the room where Madge was, the sound of hasty footsteps arrested her, and going to the outer door, she found herself face to face with Lorrimer, but Lorrimer with white face and horror in his eyes.

"For mercy's sake, Mrs. Holmes, keep Lady Madge's presence here unknown. We must do something to get her away. Lord Ferrars is dead."

"Dead! The Lord save us!"

"Hush, hush, my good woman, she may hear. But there is worse news yet!"

The caution came too late. The door opened, and Madge stood before them.

"My father is dead," she said, with unnatural calm. "I'm sure of it."

Mr. Lorrimer stepped forward and took her hand and bowed over it in silence.

"I will go to him at once! Oh, why did I ever leave him? Dearest of fathers, and this is my work!"

Lorrimer made an affrighted gesture.

"Hush, dear lady, say nothing, I beg! Oh, be careful for the sake of all who love you! You must not go to the hall at present."

"Not go to my father?" she asked, passing her hand over her forehead, as if she could not understand.

"No, not now. There are circumstances which make it imperative you should not go there, that you should not be known to be in the neighborhood."

"Circumstances about my father's death!" repeated Madge, slowly. Then, as if a light had broken suddenly upon her, she exclaimed: "He was murdered!"

Mary Holmes and Jennie, who had entered, shrank back, appalled, as they heard her. Neither doubted what she said—it sounded prophetic.

John Lorrimer trembled as he looked at that fair, slight girl, knowing what he knew, and she did not even suspect.

Madge had seen in his face confirmation of her fears. The earth seemed to reel round with her; and putting out her hands helplessly, she moaned:

"My crime has found me out! Take me away—anywhere, anywhere! Oh, that it might be to my grave!"

"Hush, hush, dear Lady Margaret! Will you—can you trust to me? I will do what I think is best for you. I know the hall is no place for you now. You can do your father no good, and—'

Madge suddenly calmed herself.

"You are very, very kind," she said, brokenly. "I would trust you, but I know that my place is near my father in my own own home; and I am going there."

Lorrimer had heard at the inn where he had stayed, and where the excited people had been talking of the murder when he got back, that Lady Madge had been recognized in the grounds by a servant, and seen to go toward the library window. By the ominous looks and nods, he had at once divined the atrocious insinuations that would be

made, and although he could not fear arrest for her —injustice could not go that length—he knew that dirt once thrown will often cling.

It was near midnight now, and finding she was determined to go at once to the hall, he proposed to conduct her there. It seemed impossible he could tell her the reason he had for wishing her not to go. Then suddenly she turned to him. She was strangely calm. Had her eyes not shone with peculiar brilliance, she might have been thought to take her terrible loss coldly. But Lorrimer understood the volcano within her breast as she said:

"I am going to trust you, for—heaven help me!
—I have no friend in the world."

"You may! You may! Lady Madge, my dearest wish is to be useful to you."

He spoke with eager warmth, that at another time might have revealed the real state of his feeling; but now everything was unnatural. Why should she be impressed with the manner of his words?

"I will trust you. If a woman is married and knows her husband to have committed a crime, can she be forced to speak?"

"No. I do not know even if she can testify against her husband; but if her speaking would relieve another of suspicion, ought she not to tell what she knows?"

"Ah—another? I—I could not condemn a man I once loved to the scaffold! It would not bring my father back to life. It would do no one any good, and heaven will avenge him!"

"Lady Madge, I think I understand now what I have feared before. You are married to Mr. St. John." She made no sign of assent or dissent, and he continued: "I must now tell you why I think it will spare you infinite pain not to go to the hall unless you are willing to tell everything you know. You are known to be in this neighborhood, and already your name is mixed up with the story, and suspicion will point to your being in collusion with St. John. I can tell what I know, but I fear it will not clear you. I saw him enter the library and you wait outside on the terrace. Legally, my own conviction goes for nothing; the fact I can testify to will be terribly against you; therefore I must, for your sake, keep silence, nor would you, perhaps, do any good by telling the facts."

Lorrimer spoke moodily; he was aghast at the terrible aspect of the case against his idol! To think that for her who was so dear to him he could do nothing! Although he knew the truth, he could not prove it.

"Oh, you must be silent, please, and so must I. What either of us will say will do good to none, and injure only one."

Lorrimer looked at her almost in anger. How she must love this man with whom yet she could not live, because he was unworthy. If he had been able to convict by his testimony St. John, and clear her, he might have refused to listen to her; as it was, to accuse him was to accuse her. Had she not been on the spot, looking on!

"Your wish is my law," he said. "I will be

silent, since my speaking would not benefit any one. But will you be able to support the ordeal of meeting your husband, knowing what you and I know?"

"Meet him, St. John, never, never!"

"But you must. He will be sent for by those who know of your marriage."

"I married him, but he is no husband of mine. No, no, never! He must never know where I am."

"Then, dear Lady Madge, do not go to the hall.

Let me manage for you."

"I will, I will! Ah, heaven help me, I forfeited my father's love and now the right to be near his dear dead body. Oh, take me anywhere, anywhere!"

Overcome by her emotion, by the last terrible thought, Lorrimer saw the pallor of death overspread her face, her hands fall, and the next moment he sprang toward her, calling loudly for Mary Holmes.





CHAPTER IX.

Meanwhile all was terror and confusion at the hall. The rector of the parish was a gentleman named Kyne, an old college friend of the earl's, and when the living of Melford became vacant, the latter gave it to his old college mate; and when he was in Devonshire the two gentlemen were much together. He was entirely in the earl's confidence, and to Mr. Kyne the steward sent a man on horseback with information of the tragedy, and the clergyman returned with him at once and took the direction of everything.

He telegraphed to London, sent information to his fellow-magistrates and himself took the key of the library, where the nobleman had been found by those whom his death-cry had brought to his aid too late.

Miss Perceval had been the first person he met as he came to the hall. She was on the terrace in front of the house.

"Oh, Mr. Kyne, I am so thankful you have come! Is not this a terrible thing?"

She was as pale as death and her teeth chattered as if with cold, despite the mild May night.

He strode past her into the house. She was no favorite of his, and she was the only subject on which he and his old friend had differed. The servants were all huddled together in the hall, near the door of the library where the late lord lay. The room was empty but for that terrible occupant, the shaded lamp still throwing its cheerful light over all, the window still open to let in the fragrant night air. The valet came forward to tell, in answer to Mr. Kyne's inquiries, how he had been alarmed, just as he was going to bed, by a terrible cry and a woman's scream. He opened his door, and found that other persons had heard it, too, and they all hastened to the library in a body, and there found his poor master dead, the blood trickling from mouth and nostrils, too evidently, even to their inexperienced eyes, strangled. Some of them had gone at once to tell Miss Perceval, whom they met coming downstairs, alarmed, like themselves, by that awful cry, and she had dispatched one of them in search of Mr. Kyne and another to the doctor.

Mr. Kyne entered the room, closed the windows, and then came out and locked the door.

Then he heard whispers among the servants that Lady Madge had been seen near the terrace just before the murder, and one of them, a groom, who had entered Lord Ferrars service recently, hinted that it was a very strange thing she should be there a few minutes before he was murdered, and yet not be found at the house now. A few stern words

from the rector silenced the gossip, but just then Miss Perceval came to the excited group.

"Did some of you see Lady Madge St. John in the grounds to-night!" she asked eagerly. No one had done so.

- "Did you, Miss Perceval?" asked Mr. Kyne.
- "Yes, I did."

"Mr. Kyne said nothing. He knew now who had started the rumor of Madge being near. He did not believe it, but to make certain he directed search to be made in the grounds. He knew the odious suspicion could have no just grounds, but she might have come to Melford to see her father, and lost courage-might be in some remote part of the grounds, and yet ignorant of the tragedy. On this chance he directed the search to be made. He then sent telegrams to various persons interested, among others to Lady Madge St. John at her husband's chambers. It will be seen that, as no other address was known, Miss Perceval had not allowed any one to know the purport of Madge's letters, and Lord Ferrars died believing his daughter had disobeyed him and was impenitently enjoying her married life without even taking the trouble to ask his pardon.

The doctor had now arrived, and he examined the body and pronounced life quite extinct. He pointed out certain livid marks about the neck, which he said must be from the fingers of a woman or the smallest-handed man he had ever known.

Mr. Kyne shuddered, but he said incredulously: "You do not mean that the slender hands of a

woman could have strength for such a thing as that?"

"My dear sir, his hold on life was so frail a child might have done it. Though he came through this attack he was slowly dying."

Mr. Kyne said nothing. If the murder had been committed by a woman, he believed there was one far more probably guilty than Madge. He and the doctor proceeded to seal up everything in the room. The scattered papers were gathered together into one drawer, and they both affixed their seals.

As they came into the hall they met Laura Perceval at the door. She was already deadly pale, as was every one in the house; but there was a look of restless anxiety in her face which Mr. Kyne noted, and the doctor too, but with a different conclusion.

"Miss Perceval," said the latter, kindly, "you had better go to your room and try to rest. To-morrow will be a trying day."

"Thank you, I will. But, doctor—Mr. Kyne—who do you think did this?"

"Time will show, let us hope," said the rector.

* * * * * * *

Mary Holmes, with Lorrimer's aid, got Madge back into her room, and then he left it; while, with Jennie's assistance, she was made comfortable. But when the swoon was over she was wandering in her mind. She did not know Mary, and fancied she was with her father.

Lorrimer was waiting below when Mary entered the room.

"I don't know what to do. She must have a doctor at once. She is very ill, and my belief is she is going to have a fever."

Lorrimer looked much perplexed.

"No one must suspect she is here, or she will be tormented with inquiries, which can do no good—which she will refuse to answer, and so cover herself with suspicion, and which may kill her after what she has endured. Have you a doctor you can trust?"

"Yes; I believe we may trust Doctor Gray."

"Can you send for him?"

"Yes. Jennie must go and say I am ill with cramps. I often have them."

"Very well, send for him; and, for your life, keep her being here secret. Put out all lights, or, better, pin a blanket before the shade to her window, so that, when a light is necessary, it may not be seen from outside."

"Never fear, sir. I always burn a light at night, being accustomed to it. So many years in the nursery spoiled me. Every one in Melford knows my light."

"So much the better. You are sure we may trust Doctor Gray?"

"Ah, surely you may. He was her mother's friend and brought her into the world."

"He will not betray her, then. I shall remain till he comes; then I will go to Exeter and come back in the morning with the crowd of sensationhunters. I will represent myself as a reporter, which will account for my going to the hall and all the inquiries I may make. Meanwhile, when Jennie comes back, prepare her for a journey. Lady Madge's safety demands it."

All this conversation passed rapidly, and then

Mary sent Jennie for Doctor Gray.

Mary Holmes, while full of horror at the terrible events happening, was yet struck by the wonderful interest this young and handsome stranger took in Lady Madge's trouble, and there was something in his manner which seemed to warrant his taking the management of everything in his own hands. Perhaps she thought he might be a relative of Mr. St. John. At all events, she was thankful to him.

Very soon the doctor came, and Mr. Lorrimer, in his self-constituted capacity of protector of Lady Madge, stepped forward and took him aside. One look at the kind face reassured him, and after a few minutes' earnest conversation the doctor was won, heart and soul, to the cause of the unhappy girl whom he had known so well in her blithe childhood. He also had a few particulars to add to what John already knew, and then, while the doctor went in to his patient, Mary Holmes came out.

"Mrs. Holmes, Lady Margaret St. John is suspected of her father's murder, and, absurd as the idea seems, appearances are terribly against her. She is known to have come to Melford secretly; to have been outside and not to have entered the house; was seen lingering about the library, and her handkerchief was found on the terrace. She has interest, and she only, in his death, and, unhappily, if I were called as a witness, the evidence I should

be obliged to give would be more condemnatory than all the rest."

"But you don't believe such a fearful thing!" exclaimed the woman, indignantly.

"Believe it! No, indeed; but it is most important that she should be believed to have left the neighborhood, or she will be subjected to an examination, even if she is not arrested; and situated as she is, the horror of the accusation may deprive her of reason. Now, what I propose is that your niece, who seems a bright girl, should put on Lady Madge's cloak, bonnet and veil. She is about her height, and if she goes to Carew station, she can there take the train for London. She must keep closely veiled, take a first-class ticket, and fee the guard to give her a compartment to herself-a very general thing with ladies travelling alone. Then she can leave the cloak and veil in the car and get out at the first stopping-place, take the next train back to Melford in her own person. I suppose all Melford people often take the three-mile journey to Exeter by rail?"

"Oh, dear, yes, sir; we do our weekly purchasing there, and go often enough."

"Then make Jennie look as like Lady Margaret as possible and explain what is wanted of her."

"I will, sir; and she is just the one who can do it."

"I think so. It is two miles from this to Carew, I believe, and she must be there to catch the five-o'clock train; so there is not much time. Let her try to get a couple of hours' sleep, and then start. She must

take all Lady Margaret's rings, wear them, and tell her to be sure to display them in taking her ticket; also to the guard; at the same time keeping carefully veiled. Once in the car she must be careful to remove them and put them in her pocket. If this plan is well carried out, I think it will stop all inquiry in this neighborhood; and tell your niece she shall have five pounds for losing her night's rest."

"Indeed, sir, she 'll do nothing of the kind. I'd like to see any one belonging to me who wouldn't do twenty times as much for that dear innocent!"

"You will need money, at any rate, to carry out the plan," he said, laying his purse down. "I shall see what I can do to set inquirers on the scent to Carew to-morrow early, and it would, of course, seem quite likely that any one wanting to leave secretly would leave by another station than Melford to avoid suspicion." The doctor now came out of the patient's room. He looked grave. "Lady Madge is suffering from the terrible mental shock she has had. She must be kept absolutely quiet, or I will not answer for consequences. She must see no one at all but you, nurse. If any change takes place send to me at once; and I think you had better plead rheumatism to account for my coming." The doctor turned to Lorrimer. "And you, sir, who seem to have performed a Samaritan's part to this friendless lady, are you staying in the neighborhood?"

Lorrimer was somewhat embarrassed; then, conscious of the purity of his motives, he said:

- "I hope I may call myself a friend of this lady, and anticipating trouble for her I took the liberty of watching over her. I will explain further at another time."
- "But where are you going to-night, or rather this morning?"
- "I dined at the Crown and meant to sleep there, but I—"
- "You won't get in there at this hour, or if you did, it would cause remarks, but come with me; you will be welcome at my house. I am a bachelor, and there is no one but my old housekeeper, who is very discreet."

Lorrimer gladly accepted, and left the cottage with him.

Mary Holmes equipped her niece as planned, and as she looked after her, when she had started in gray morning, she thought she might easily pass thus dressed for Lady Madge—to those who would know so little of her as the people of Carew would be likely to do.





CHAPTER X.

The next day, the magistrates, who had been neighbors and friends of Lord Ferrars, assembled at the inquest held to ascertain the cause of his death.

The servants were first examined, but nothing bearing on the case was elicited beyond what was already known.

Then Laura Perceval was examined, and she stated that between ten and eleven o'clock she stepped out on the balcony in front of the window, as she frequently did before retiring, when she heard a fearful cry. She looked below and saw a woman's figure rush down the steps toward the shrubbery.

When she was asked if she could say whose figure it was, she answered slowly:

"It was that of Lady Margaret St. John."

A murmur ran through the room. And then a man came forward, who stated that he had seen a lady, closely veiled and in a gray cloak, arrive at Melford station the evening before, whom, in spite of her veil, he recognized as Lady Madge, but had

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not noticed where she went; had supposed, of course, she was going to the hall.

Another man, a porter from Carew Station, which was the first beyond Melford, and two miles further from Exeter, stated that he had seen a lady leave by the five o'clock train, who answered the description of Lady Madge. She was dressed in a long gray cloak and veil, had particularly noticed her beautiful rings as she put her hand on the door of the carriage.

Asked to describe the rings, he mentioned one which several present knew to belong to Lady Madge.

There being nothing further to be elicited, the inquiry was adjourned until the new Lord Ferrars and the metropolitan detective could arrive.

The new Lord Ferrars was that Gerald Doyle who had introduced Lawrence St. John into Ballyreen, and, as Lord Ferrars had shrewdly guessed, as a reward for some play debt leniently dealt with.

Little more need be said as to his antecedents than that the nobleman had been entirely right in his surmise. A thoughtless spendthrift who had for some years lived solely on his future prospects, his pay as lieutenant not being sufficient to pay his cigar bill. A barren title it might be that he would inherit, yet he had hoped by playing his cards well that some slice of his uncle's personal estate would be left to him on which to support the title.

There would be such ample fortune for Margaret that his hope, had he been commonly prudent, would have been reasonable; but prudent he never had been in his life, and bringing his gambler friend to share the hospitality of his kinsman was an offense Lord Ferrars was not likely to pardon.

The Melford Hall murder was the theme of all men's tongues for the next few days, and many widely divergent opinions were expressed. In the immediate neighborhood, where Madge was known and loved, and Laura looked upon as an intriguing adventuress who had, under the mask of friendship for the daughter, poisoned her father's mind against her, the opinion was almost unanimous that Laura was the guilty one; but farther-away public opinion, judging solely by the facts elicited, unprejudiced, because all were equally strangers, was strongly against Madge.

She had been on the spot secretly, actually a minute before the murder, and she was now missing from her former home. During these days St. John's real character was all raked up, and it seemed to show depraved instincts in a lady to have married a blackleg. If motive were demanded there were many theories.

It was suspected that Lord Ferrars had made a will, disinheriting his daughter, and that he was about to marry Miss Perceval. Was it likely the latter would murder the man from whom such honor was to come? Had she not every inducement to prolong his life rather? On the other hand, what more likely than that his daughter, who had proved her depravity and ingratitude, hearing of this will, had gone to Melford intending to obtain possession of it, had stolen into the library,

been discovered by her father in the act of abstracting it, who, disguised as she was, may not have recognized her? A struggle ensued, and mad with fear, determined to escape with the document, she had attempted to silence her father's cries for assistance and, ignorant of his feeble condition, had unwittingly become a parricide. That the girl, who had married as she had done, should end by trying to purloin the will that would disinherit her, seemed quite natural.

* * * * * * *

A week later the state of affairs was this: The inquest was over, in which it had been proved that Lord Ferrars died by strangulation, and proved, too, by the evidence of a maid, who was passing Miss Perceval's door at the time the death-cry was heard and saw her come out, that she could not possibly be the guilty party, and it was almost proved by circumstantial evidence that his own daughter was that one. Yet the local jury had returned a verdict against some person or persons unknown. Of course, the case would not rest here. Detectives were at work to discover who that "unknown" was, and especially to discover the whereabouts of that strangely missing daughter, against whom suspicion so strongly pointed.

Captain St. John came down to hear Lord Ferrars's will read after the funeral. And when he said that his wife had left home during his absence abroad and had not returned, his anxiety and consternation were so evident, his manner so perfect, that he was actually believed! It was known, too, he was mak-

ing every exertion to find her, and did not scruple to hint at foul play toward her as well as her father. Some thought this was collusion between husband and wife, others that both father and daughter had been foully dealt with.

Lorrimer, in keeping with the *rôle* of reporter, which he had taken up, attended everything that was going on. He interviewed those whose information might be valuable, and was thus enabled to be as much behind the scenes as possible.

His own conviction was that Laura and St. John were accomplices in the murder, remembering, as he did, the conversation he had overheard. By what jugglery she had managed to prove that she was in her room he could not discover, but that there was jugglery he was convinced. Her motive he believed he knew; he had learned that there had been a will made soon after Madge's flight, made when Lord Ferrars seemed entirely under Laura's influence, and made, no doubt, in her favor. This amply supplied the motive. His inquiry led him to the conviction that there was no foundation for the report. That he would have married her was mere local gossip; and from what the rector said, he felt sure her power was rapidly waning, and she must have been aware of it, too. To the detectives he related his suspicions, but they seemed to think he knew nothing of the subject. (Laura was very pleasant and generous in her entertainment of every one and won golden opinions from strangers.) They shook their heads at Mr. Lorrimer's amateur ideas. There occurred something that staggered them, and completely bewildered him.

Every one interested was assembled in the drawing-room of Melford Hall to hear the last will and testament read.

To most people it seemed a sadly significant fact that Lady Madge was not in her place with the others. Her husband, white and nervous, singularly unlike the elegant Captain St. John, was there.

The new Lord Ferrars was there with well-affected indifference as to the result of the coming reading on himself; and Laura, too, whom almost every one present believed was to benefit largely.

The lawyer entered, looking perplexed and worried. Nevertheless, he proceeded with true lawyer-like phlegm, as if no four or five persons' nerves were in a state of tension, while he slowly unfolded the document, wiped his spectacles, adjusted them carefully, and then looked round from one to the other.

No one in that room knew what was in the document, unless Miss Perceval, who sat so placidly cool and collected. The lawyer was as ignorant as any one else, for it had been drawn up by a lawyer from Exeter and witnessed by his clerk. Truly, Laura's star must have been in the ascendant then.

The lawyer, Mr. Dean, proceeded to read. It was a very short, clear document.

After leaving legacies to all his old servants, one thousand pounds to his valued friend, the Rev. William Kyne, and five hundred pounds a year to

his daughter, Lady Madge Doyle, for her life, to be used for her sole use and benefit, he bequeathed to his dear friend, Laura Perceval, at her particular request, the sum of one hundred pounds!

There was a pause. Lorrimer, who, by the courtesy of the rector, with whom he had become well acquainted through Doctor Gray, had been allowed in the room, could scarcely believe what he heard.

Where now was his ground of suspicion against Laura?

Miss Perceval looked triumphant, Lord Ferrars puzzled and St. John had bitten his lips till the blood came.

Mr. Dean proceeded.

"'I bequeath the whole of my remaining personal property to my nephew, Gerald Gerton Doyle.'"

After the discovery that the supposed intrigante, Miss Perceval, was, by her own desire, left only a hundred pounds, nothing seemed to surprise any one. Yet Lord Ferrars had fainted. Miss Perceval was the first to discover it. She sprang to him, raised his head, and applied her vinaigrette to his nostrils. In a few minutes he recovered, looked very much confused, and muttered that it was "the confounded heat," but no one was deceived.

Mr. Dean still looked as if he had more to say, and when the commotion, caused by Lord Ferrars's swoon, had passed off, every one looked at him, wondering what was to come next.

"I have read this will because it seems to be the only document of the sort forthcoming, but I have

to say that this was not the last-made will of my lamented client."

Had Miss Perceval been turned to stone, she could not have looked more white or more rigid. The rector and Lorrimer were perplexed that in a matter on which it was certain now she could have so little interest, she should show so much feeling.

"No, this was not the last will of the late Lord Ferrars," said Mr. Dean. "I drew up, by his instructions, a will which he signed a few hours before his death. That will was witnessed by Mr. Kyne."

Every one looked at the rector, who bowed his head affirmatively.

"I, together with Mr. Kyne, have searched everywhere for this document and failed to find it. It is only to be concluded that his lordship destroyed it, which is most improbable, or that it was abstracted at the time and by the hand of the murderer."

Each looked at the other. Who was that murderer?





CHAPTER XI.

After the reading of that document, which was obliged to stand as the last will of Lord Ferrars, since no other was forthcoming, the party who had assembled to hear it separated. St. John went back to search anew for his lost wife, and, now that her father was dead he meant to take much more vigorous measures to find her than he had hitherto dared.

Miss Perceval announced her intention of going to London next day. As for Lorrimer, he was utterly confounded.

Where was now his theory of Miss Perceval's guilt? Where the motive? In fact, there seemed to the outer world no motive for any one to have committed this murder. No one gained but the man against whom there was not one circumstance for the finger of suspicion to point at—Lord Ferrars!

But could John Lorrimer have been present at an interview which took place that evening after the household had retired, it would have upset his ideas once again, and given him confidence in his first conclusion.

Lord Ferrars was sitting outside the drawing-

room in a balcony, smoking and thinking over the strange freak of fortune which lifted him from one of the most impecunious to one of the wealthiest men in England, and his thoughts were doing him some good.

Gerald Doyle, now Lord Ferrars, was not a bad man, but he was a very weak one, and knew he had been a fool. In his solitary reverie he was resolving to quit his old life, to travel for a year or two, and then to settle down and enjoy the goods the gods had provided. Just as he had made this virtuous resolution the window opened, and Laura Perceval stepped out and joined him.

Laura was dressed with apparent carelessness; but a woman would have known this was only in appearance; that that flowing Watteau dress of black silk, with its dainty lace ruffles at neck and wrist, had not been thrown on as carelessly as it would seem; that those long tresses hanging down her neck as if from sheer negligence would not have been worn that way if their owner had not known that her dark beauty was never so bewitching as when looking out from those clouds of hair. A graceful, lovely picture it was that stood by Lord Ferrars's side.

"As you did not think it worth while to seek an interview with me, Lord Ferrars, I had to come to you here," she spoke, half in jest, half in earnest, it would seem. "It is not so long ago since you made opportunities in spite of all obstacles."

"Yes, but, Laura, think what to-day has been, dear. I am only now getting over my surprise."

"And your pleasure."

"Yes, indeed, and my pleasure."

- "To what do you suppose you owe such a wonderful chance? To Lord Ferrars's sense of your deserts?"
- "I suppose to my uncle's sense of right. He must have known what misery a barren title entails on its possessor."

"Yes; but, strangely enough, he had no such sense of right till it was cultivated."

Gerald looked inquiringly, then said slowly:

"I don't quite understand."

Laura laughed lightly.

"You little knew the friend you had at work. Directly I saw Madge's folly about St. John I saw your chance. Lord Ferrars would never leave his money to enrich a fellow like that. I made myself necessary to him. I sounded your praises adroitly, and finally induced him, without allowing him to suppose he was being influenced, to make the will that enriches you. And now what is to be my reward?"

She lifted her pretty face temptingly near his,

but he did not appear tempted.

"Laura," he said, hesitatingly, "they are saying hard things of you. You have done nothing unfair to my poor cousin I hope? Of course, I pay no attention to the gossip, but I ask you."

"It is very kind of you," she said sarcastically, for the coolness of the man for whom she had

plotted so well was beginning to irritate her.

"Nonsense, Laura! Don't be sarcastic. But,

really, I should feel very uncomfortable if I believed there had been anything unfair in this business."

"How can you believe so badly of me? Madge behaved shamefully to her father, and he would have left the bulk of his money to charities, had I not pleaded your cause; and this is the thanks I get!"

A few tears coursed down Laura's cheeks.

"There, there; don't cry, dear. I am sure you would do nothing wrong. And so you have been working for me all this time and said not a word in you letters. Sly one! Kiss me, dear. You look awfully pretty to-night."

Laura, soothed by his warmer tone, dried her tears and was happy. She did not or would not notice that his manner was not that of an ardent lover—not what it had been two years before when, on a visit to his uncle, he had fallen in love with the brilliant companion, who gave her whole heart to him. He was too poor to marry, and she knew it; but she had resolved then, if she could compass it, he should not be poor long.

Therefore when St. John came to Ballyreen, at her instance, though apparently brought by Gerald, she had aided his suit, encouraged Madge in her girlish fancy, telling her stories of his generosity and good heart, until the fancy was fanned into love. And when the secret marriage was proposed, as we have seen, she cleared the way.

"But, Laura," said Lord Ferrars after a pause, "what does that second will mean? Do you believe there was one?"

Laura's face darkened.

"Of course, I believe it was made. I can't understand who has been countermining my plans. I was with the old man incessantly, made myself a slave, read to him, walked with him, did everything to prevent his mind dwelling on Madge, and to think, when I believed I knew everything he did and thought, that he was actually changing his will!"

Gerald looked doubtfully at her; she seemed to have forgotten his presence.

"I think I ought to do something handsome for Madge. I wonder if that other will gave everything to her?"

"Oh, I dare say Mr. Dean will tell you, and you can play the heroic and refuse to benefit by her misfortune. It would be quite romantic and sound so well in the papers! I wonder if your creditors would see the beauty of such magnanimity—"

"Hang it, Laura, don't rail like that! I have no intention of doing anything quixotic. If that other will turns up, I have no doubt I shall make a stand to keep what I have, but one need not be quite a brute for all that."

"The other will will never turn up, for I believe the old man destroyed it. No one had any interest in stealing it. But now, Gerald, I have to decide on what I shall do. I must, of course, go from here and look for another post, I suppose."

"Oh, no, you needn't. You'll go to Exeter or

London and stay for a few months."

[&]quot;And then?"

"And then— Oh, I suppose we shall be married, eh?"

"Oh, yes! Oh, Gerald! You seemed so cold and strange I was fearing you had changed to me. Oh, if you ceased to love me I should die! My love! My love!"

She threw herself, sobbing, on his breast, her ardent, passionate self revealed now without falseness or disguise.

"But I won't cease to love you, dear," said the young lord, pressing her to him with something of his old ardor, for she was very pretty and loved him devotedly, he knew. "Of course, I cannot marry for some time after my uncle's death, and I want you to be comfortable meanwhile. Of course, you will depend on me for the future."

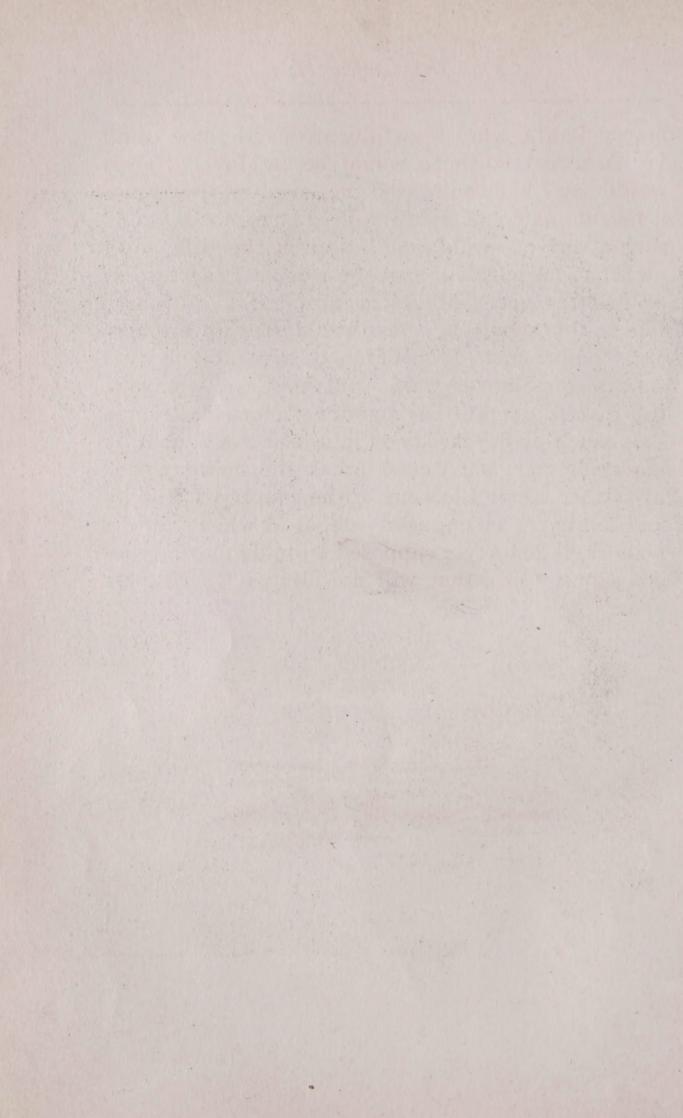
And Laura, though she would much rather have become Lady Ferrars at once, knew that the etiquette of rank would not permit it without scandal, and so was obliged to be content with matters as they were.

After she had left, Gerald lit a fresh cigar.

"I suppose this will end up in a deuce of a row. And I have let myself deeper in the mire than ever! What a weak fool I am! But it would have been brutal to have told her now, just when she had given me such proof of her love. That 's the deuce of it. She is so terribly in earnest. Of course, I'm grateful to her, though most likely the old boy would have used me pretty well, and I would rather have had part and a more comfortable feeling; but if I was not in love with Clara and felt inclined to



"HOW BEAUTIFUL! IS THAT FOR ME?"-See Page 37.



marry Laura, who is awfully attractive, how could I? A nice talk there would be, by Jove! They would say I had committed the murder. No, I owe it to the name of Ferrars, if I marry, to do so in such a way as would not besmirch the title, and I owe it to myself to marry the woman I can respect as well as love. And I'm afraid if I did marry Laura, this whole business would rise up unpleasantly before me. It wouldn't be agreeable to have such a very clever wife. But how can I manage this? I'll give her any amount of money, of course -as much, if she insists on it, as she would gain by marrying me; but I must break the matter to her by letter. Once I am out of the country, I'll write and tell her I'm engaged-engaged when I was a poor devil and never supposed I could follow my inclinations. Yes, that will do. But I wish it was over."





CHAPTER XII.

The weeks following her father's murder, Lady Madge had passed concealed at Mary Holmes's cottage. The plan conceived by Lorrimer had succeeded, as we have seen, and every one believed she had gone to London by way of Carew.

She had passed through a terrible crisis, and was yet so weak that it was necessary for her still to be kept in ignorance of what was happening. Slowly and indistinctly her memory had returned, after she came out of the delirium in which she had lain, and seeing that she could not be moved for some weeks, Lorrimer, who feared to quit her vicinity, although he knew his presence did not contribute to her safety, yet felt he must seek some lodging in the neighborhood, and wondered how he could do that without suspicion, when the good doctor, guessing his difficulty, insisted on his remaining with him. To him, Lorrimer had confided his love for Madge, his knowledge of her husband's worthlessness and his resolve to be to her as a brother,

and to devote his life and fortune to her happiness.

Such chivalrous devotion was so rare that the doctor conceived a warm friendship for the young man, and thus he remained as the doctor's guest till Madge began to gain strength, and then some steps had to be taken, for it was impossible for her to be seen about Melford. The cloud of suspicion hanging over her, the humiliating circumstances, all would have gone far to retard recovery. Where could she go? Her heart longed for Ireland where her childhood had been passed. They had only passed three months of each year at Melford and the rest in her own dear country.

Lorrimer, finding her wish to go there so strong, decided to go to London to learn what he could of St. John, and whether there was a chance of him having any one on the watch at Ballyreen, as a probable refuge for her.

* * * * * * *

St. John had returned to London, as we have said, for before he could benefit by his marriage and by Cicely's death, he must find his wife. If it had been a necessity before, it was doubly so now. The missing will undoubtedly made her heiress. He had been terribly uneasy when he found his wife had been on the terrace just before her father's death, but the very fact of her non-appearance at the inquest told him that she did not mean to tell anything she might know, and he was at ease. For some reason best known to himself he had not sought to speak to Laura since the murder, although when he heard the will read he misunderstood, as

every one else did, her tactics, and he could not see that while appearing to work in his interest she had indirectly gained her own. But that last will, which he now knew was not the one which should have been abstracted, she had evidently known nothing of. If he could only find Madge! He must and would do so.

He began by doing what he had avoided during Lord Ferrars's life, not wishing that nobleman to become aware that Lady Margaret was not living with him. He inserted an advertisement, asking that any information as to the whereabouts of Lady Madge Doyle, or St. John, might be communicated to him, and offering a liberal reward. And then he described her. For some days there was no answer, and Terry kept a vigilant watch for any that there might me, that he might warn Lady Madge, should she be in danger. He knew she had left Mecklenburg Square, but expected she might come back unless she had gone to Ireland; and there, right near her own home, he had a friend who was warned to let him know if she arrived, so that he had little doubt if any information came he could put her on her guard. But fate was against him.

Captain St. John sent Terry with a note to the far end of the town, about a week after the first advertisement appeared, and it was during his absence that a woman came to the chambers, who said she had something to tell him.

She informed him that she had been seamstress at Mrs. Mooney's when a Miss Doyle had come there, brought by an Irish valet, but she had seen scraps of paper once, in the waste-basket, on which was written "Madge." From the moment this Miss Doyle came to the house she knew there was a mystery about her; her trunks had come from Ireland, and contained such clothing as only a lady of rank would have; and when she saw the advertisement, she had seen at once who she was. She had gone away now, but would return.

St. John listened carefully.

"Are those trunks still at the lodgings?" he asked.

"Yes," said the girl, whose name was Rachel Stone.

"Very well; I have no doubt you are right. It is Lady Margaret St. John who has been lodging with Mrs. Mooney. Now here is one-half the promised reward; you will get the other when you send me a telegram telling me she has returned, or that some one claims the trunks."

Rachel Stone took the money gladly, and was

leaving, when St. John said:

"Stay! Tell me what the Irishman was like who took her to Mrs. Mooney?"

A sly smile crossed the girl's lips as she said:

"It was Mrs. Mooney's brother-in-law Terry, who lives with you, sir."

St. John rose.

"By Jove! So that is it! Well, my good girl, you have earned the money, and may earn more. Mind, not a word to Mrs. Mooney of what you have done!"

"No fear, sir; I don't want to lose my place."

When she had left, St. John smiled maliciously.

"So that is it, and I have been hoodwinked by that Irish bogtrotter. Well, I will have the pleasure of making use of him. So long as he thinks he deceives me he will be quiet about wages, and I shall have the benefit of his services, and can frustrate his little plans. Decidedly I shall not send him away, but shall watch him. He is doubtless in communication with Madge, and I shall learn where she is. No; he is more valuable now than ever."

It did not occur to St. John that Terry had merely acted all through from motives of manly pity, and had had no communication since her rescue by Lorrimer with either of them. He believed he was bribed to her interest.

He hastily cast over in his mind the circumstances attending Cicely's death. Was there anything in it that Terry could have known? No, he was sure there was not. Pshaw! Why did he always think of that? It always made him feel queer. He would go out and shake off this folly. He took his hat and sallied forth. He did not return till it was time to dress for dinner. The hall of the house in which he had chambers was long and handsome, with a lamp of painted glass swinging in the center, which cast a soft, dim light over everything. He entered as usual, when, to his surprise, he saw a woman's figure gliding toward him, as if she had come down the stairs, although he had not seen her. She was handsomely dressed. He hardly looked at her face, for on the ungloved finger gleamed an emerald ring. The ring! He staggered, and his eyes met

those of the woman. It was Cicely? He sank into the nearest seat, his heart beating, his tongue cleaving to his mouth. With a shudder he had averted his eyes, and yet he felt he must raise them, must know what he had seen. He summoned a desperate courage and looked. There was nothing-no sign of that awful presence. Had he been dreaming? He got up and shook himself. He had been a victim to an optical illusion. His nerves must be in a terrible state. He must put himself under treatment. He went slowly up the stairs, his knees still trembling. He devoutly hoped that Terry would not be still absent. No; he heard him inside. He heaved a sigh of relief and entered. He looked keenly at his valet, who, clothes-brush in hand, stood unconscious apparently of scrutiny.

"Terry, has any one been here? Who was that woman who went down just now?" he asked, sharply.

"A woman, sir?" asked Terry, innocently. "What woman?"

"Don't repeat my words, fellow! I suppose a woman for some one else."

Rarely did Captain St. John lose his temper thus, but he told himself his nerves were completely unstrung.





CHAPTER XIII.

A month passed and no message came from Mecklenburg Square, and St. John began to fear that Madge would never send for her property. Yet she was poor now, and no doubt all her girlish treasures, her mother's portrait, her jewels, all were there; and as she would still think she could claim them without risk, he hardly thought she would let them go. And he was right. One day a telegram was brought to him from Rachel Stone. Only the words:

"Gentlemen here for trunks."

But he knew what it meant. He seized his hat and rushed out. Hailing a hansom cab, he told the man he should have double fare if he reached Mecklenburg Square in ten minutes.

A gentleman! Who could that be? Had she friends unknown to him? It must be the rector of Melford. There was danger in the thought that she might have a strong, true friend. He hoped everything from her forlorn condition. Disgraced, homeless, friendless, he believed, could he once meet her, her love would overcome her resentment; that it was knowledge of her weakness that kept her away; but with a friend to strengthen her res-

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olution he had cause to fear. He reached Mrs. Mooney's house within half an hour of the time the telegram had been sent, but the trunks had been taken away. Rachel Stone, who had been looking out for him, met him before he could ring the bell, and said:

"You are too late, but I will find out who the gent is that came for the trunks. I know him by sight. I will send word to-night."

With this he was forced to be satisfied.

The same evening he got a note from Rachel telling him the gentleman was named Lorrimer, and had been living at a house opposite Mrs. Mooney's for the latter part of the time Lady Madge was stopping there; that she had frequently seen him watch Miss Doyle out of this house and follow her.

"Lorrimer! Lorrimer! Who could have thought it! The fool was in love with her I knew, but this kind of thing is rather too much! Look out, my friend Lorrimer, or you will find yourself in danger before you know it. You must not interfere with

my business."

To find where Lorrimer was would be comparatively easy; he had doubtless omitted to take any special precaution, not anticipating that he would be suspected of aiding Madge. He went directly to the American Exchange and found as he expected that Lorrimer had ordered his letters to be sent on, and the address was Queen's Hotel, Dublin.

Dublin! Then Madge was in Ireland, or going there, that was the best thing he knew of yet for

his plans. He had reason for knowing that in Ireland he could do more than he could in England—for reasons the reader will see later.

He was a little afraid of Terry, yet he was too self-indulgent and too lazy to go without his valet, so he decided to take him, and to trust to his own ingenuity to render him harmless.

* * * * * *

Meanwhile, Madge had slowly got over her illness, but she emerged from her sick-room a sadly changed creature. Her wealth of golden hair had been cut off, and now it rippled round her head like a close-cropped boy's, her radiant look of health and spirit had given place to a camellia-like pallor, and her great eyes, always the feature of her face, were now full of a pathetic light. So changed was she, that it seemed safe for her to go to Exeter and stay a few days before taking the longer journey to Ireland.

Doctor Gray agreed to take her after dark in his brougham, and Jennie Holmes was to accompany her as maid, and thus it was done, and then Lorrimer went to London and got her trunks, and, that errand accomplished, he returned to the hotel, where, as a friend of Doctor Gray, Lady Madge was staying.

During this month it could hardly be that Madge would see Lorrimer's absolute devotion to her, and not guess at something of the true state of his feelings, and this was very terrible to her. She could not help liking him, being almost painfully grateful, but of love she dare never think again, even if she

was not the legal wife of St. John. How could she ever love again, she who for love's sake was a wreck. Life for her was done; her remaining days must be a slow vegetation, in which she would expiate her ingratitude to her father! She had not been strong enough to insist on Lorrimer returning to London, and leaving her to fight alone her battle with fate, but now she was going back to her own land where she could count on humble and faithful friends even if her equals should turn away from her. For this there should be no chance. As plain Miss Doyle she would live so obscurely that she would go through life unnoticed, unconnected with the unhappy girl whose name had been a byword throughout England for weeks.

Lorrimer returned, and when he came to the hotel to tell Madge that her property was below, he was struck by the new look of strength in her face.

"Mr. Lorrimer, how can I ever thank you for your very great kindness. I have no words to express my sense of—"

"Dear Lady Madge, I ask nothing better than to

serve you without thanks."

"Then I will say nothing," she said, her woman's instinct telling her he was ready to burst forth with words she was afraid to hear. "I will not thank you, but as I may not see you again before I leave for Dublin, I want to tell you that I shall never cease to be grateful—"

"But," he said, in consternation, "you do not mean that you will not let me go with you, to see

you safely there?"

"Mr. Lorrimer, how can I accept such kindness at your hands—it is impossible."

The idea that she was going away, going henceforth to be independent of him, loosed the pent-up flood-gate of his soul. All prudence was gone. He must lay his life at her feet, show her how useless it was to him unless she made it useful. He had been a hundred times lately on the point of giving way to the longing for expression that possessed him, but refrained, for fear of losing the blessing he had and being banished from her presence. Passion now broke down everything before it.

"Why can you not? Because the only pleasure and happiness I have is in being useful to you. My life to me is worthless, has been ever since I knew you loved a villain and I had no right to love you. But now you need me. Oh, use me! Let me stand between you and the world! I ask no reward, scarcely a kind word! You love that man still, I know. I will not offend you even by speaking of him or blaming you for your wasted affection. But you need a friend. Try to think of me as a brother, and I will never remind you I am not one. I swear it! Only do not order me to go where I cannot see you."

Madge was stupefied by this torrent of words, but still more perhaps by the manner in which they were uttered. The shaking voice, the subtle atmosphere of passion, affected her in spite of herself, and she felt the tears rise to her eyes as she realized what devotion this was, thrown away. What happiness it might have been had her heart not been so perverse, which is only another name for "hu-man."

"Mr. Lorrimer, I cannot—you must know that I cannot—accept such devotion as you offer, such a sacrifice of all your interests," she said. But the words to herself sounded formal and cold, and she was not aware that her eyes made up for what her words lacked.

"Do not talk of my interests," he broke in passionately. "Think only of my pleasure and happiness. I neglect no duty in devoting myself to your happiness. I have no relations, no ties, and it is the only chance of pleasure life holds for me."

What was she to do? She could not accept; neither could she bear to inflict pain.

"You put me in a very painful position, Mr. Lorrimer. I could not—no woman could—allow such —such self-sacrifice," she faltered tremulously.

"But," he said, sadly, "the sacrifice is made; it depends not on you or myself. I tried hard to live down my folly and failed. There is no other way for me to do. I must stay near you, snatching such brief pleasures as I can, or I shall become a wanderer on the face of the earth. But say nothing, only let me see you as far as Dublin. The city is a beautiful one. I have many acquaintances, reason enough for my being there, and I will not intrude on you. I swear I shall be no sighing lover, worrying you with my woes, but just a true friend, at hand when you call on me. You have two bitter enemies. I will defend you, and never again will I remind you that I love you! I worship you!"

Poor Madge did not love him. No, no, of course not; but it was not unpleasant to her wounded heart to know that even if the man on whom she had lavished her affection cared only for her father's gold, here was one at least who loved her for herself.

"You are very kind," she said, with sweet tremulous lips.

He sprang eagerly toward her.

"And you consent? You will let me go with you?"

"I must," she said, smiling, though her eyes were still moist.

He snatched her hand and pressed his lips eagerly on it.

"Bless you, bless you!" he said. "You have made me happy!"

He dared trust himself no longer but left the room, while Madge looked at her hand still red from his ardent kiss, as she muttered, with something of her old archness:

"I hope he will not want to do that again; it would never do to have him around."





CHAPTER XIV.

Laura Perceval was seated in the luxurious little drawing-room of the villa in which she had arranged to reside until she should become Lady Ferrars. Gerald had gone on the continent, but before doing so, had placed a thousand pounds at her disposal, and she had already entered on its enjoyment. She was handsomely lodged and beautifully dressed, but an expression of anxious discontent was on her handsome face, an open letter was in her hand, which she read and reread.

"He is playing me false. There is foundation for the rumor. I know it by the tameness of his denial. Ah, if there is justice in heaven he shall bitterly repent it if he plays with me; but the best way in which to avoid that is to have him in my power. I must know the contents of that other will, but to do so I must see Lawrence. I believe, if I gave him a round sum, he will let me know it. It can't prejudice him to do so, though he professes to know nothing of it. But that, of course, means nothing. And if it is against Gerald, I will take care it shall be proved, unless he marries me; and

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if he does, then—then—well, then it shall never be brought to light. But if he marries this girl in defiance of me, then he shall be cast out of his affluent ease, and I— Well, I will make a bargain with Lawrence. Oh, but it must not come to that!" she muttered. "He must marry me! I love him too well! I cannot live without him; and, if I know him rightly, he will never lose that money."

She sat down to her davenport and wrote a note

as follows:

"DEAR LAWRENCE: Call on me as soon as convenient. I think the interview may be mutually serviceable. LAURA."

Captain St. John, on getting this note, which he did on the very day after he found Lorrimer was Madge's friend, did not delay an instant in setting out for the address indicated. He hoped for certain news of Madge, and believed Laura was more likely than any one else to have it.

He and Laura, since that fatal night, had not met alone. He did not dream of her passionate love for Gerald, or indeed that there had ever been love-passages between them; for, with her own ends in view, she had carefully kept her secret from him; and he had been obliged, on finding that so small a legacy was left to her, to give up his once conceived theory that she had worked in her own interest against his; but, at the same time, she had not kept her promise to him, and he distrusted her. Another thing, he dreaded to be alone with her. He feared her questions. She must know who had killed Lord Ferrars; but he could not bear to see her, knowing she knew it. But, to some extent, this feeling had

worn off now, and to find Madge was of paramount importance. True, he believed that he had the clue; but he was not sure, and perhaps Laura could aid in getting possession of her if he failed; but he would try alone first.

Knowing nothing of Gerald having given her money, he expected to find her living either as governess or companion to some one or else subsisting on her legacy till she should find employment. But in both conjectures he found himself wrong. The house in which he found her was neither the handsome residence of a family likely to need the services of so costly an appendage as Miss Perceval would be, nor was it the sort of economical respectable one in which a governess seeking a position would probably lodge. It was a pretty villa with that indescribable air of festive rurality peculiar to the houses of prosperous Bohemians, houses in which, if the shades are sometimes a little awry, the birds seem always in song, the piano always in tune, and when touched at all, touched with masterly fingers, no sweetly tinkling boarding-school pieces, and where the flowers seem ever to bloom in the garden and to fill the air of the house inside. It was a house like hundreds of others in St. John's Wood.

Inside it was as cosy as the outside was pretty. He had scarcely time to note this, when Laura entered, exquisitely dressed, as usual. And looking at her, remembering that a very few weeks of such life would absorb her small legacy, he began to have doubts of her, but in this he wronged her; a

bad, unscrupulous woman was Laura, not a frail one.

- "Lawrence," she said, "I want to know as you are about town so much, if you have heard anything about Lord Ferrars."
 - "Not much, since that terrible time."
- "It was terrible, wasn't it—and," she said, looking at him steadily, "was it not most strange about that missing will?"

"Very."

"I should think, Lawrence, you would be very anxious to know its contents; it might have reinstated your wife in her rights."

"It would do me no good if it did," said Lawrence, uneasily. He did not like the topic, although, of course, Laura was not like any one else. "My wife chooses to put herself out of the way of any good of that sort."

"Oh, but if it were once sure she was heiress, she might come forward and claim her rights. It is a sad pity it can't be found. You say you have heard but little of Lord Ferrars. Have you heard that he is soon coming back to England? That is a change of programme."

"Yes; and also that he is head over heels in love with his fiancée."

Ah! Laura's hand went quickly to her heart, but she said the next moment, with apparent calmness:

"His fiancée! I have heard some gossip about a Miss Jerningham, but I thought it only talk."

"Oh, no; it is serious. He was understood to be engaged to her last summer before we went to Dublin, but he was too poor then to think of marriage. Now I know for certain the engagement has been proclaimed at Nice, where her family is. I have a friend who has just come from there."

Laura had become very pale, but, in the soft, rose-tinted light, her pallor could not be seen, even had St. John been less preoccupied than he was, but her voice was stiff and hard as she said:

"It would be strange if that will ever should be found, and he by it be deprived of all but his empty title. Miss Jerningham is quite poor, I hear?"

Something in Laura's tone—in her glittering eyes—aroused Lawrence to a sense that there was more in this conversation than appeared on the surface, and he said:

"Yes; a penniless girl of rank, I believe. I suppose to any one sufficiently interested there might be ways and means of learning the contents of the will."

"No doubt," she said, with a suspicion of mockery in her tone. "Well, I confess I am interested, and so must you be. Pshaw, Lawrence, why should you and I beat about the bush? You have your secret—keep it. I have mine, which I am now going to tell you in a few words. I want vengeance! In helping me to it you can help yourself; therefore I can count on your forgetting any little thing in it which may seem as if I had forgotten your interests for those of another. I will atone for that.

"Gerald Doyle loved me before you ever saw Lady Margaret; he could not marry me because he was too poor. I was determined he should not long

remain so. I wrote to you, suggested you should make his acquaintance and manage to get an invitation to visit Ballyreen. I knew your success with women. I wanted Lady Madge out of the way-to marry against her father's commands-and I fostered her girlish admiration for your good looks, and told her that I knew you by reputation as one of the most chivalrous of men. You know the rest. I need not go into details. You see my plan. When Gerald knew he was rich, he renewed his vows to me, though, I must confess, not very ardently; however, he promised as soon as the year of mourning was over we should be married. He went off to Nice to spend the intervening time, but now I hear these rumors, although it is not two months since he went, and each letter has become cooler and cooler, and this last one mentions an entanglement which may alter his plans, which he will explain in his next; this is evidently to prepare me for his intended treachery.

"But I am not a woman to be lightly cast off like that, and I will do anything to hurl him down from his present position. I think if that will were found it would do it. He left me a sum of money to provide for me, as he said, till our marriage. And I will give a couple of hundred pounds to know the contents of that will."

Lawrence had gone through a variety of emotions during her recital; resentment, surprise and now elation, for just as he was wondering how to replenish his depleted purse in order to go to Ireland, this windfall came in his way.

"Two hundred pounds would do a great deal with an attorney's clerk, and Mr. Dean's clerk is no doubt informed of the contents of the will."

"Two hundred pounds will do a great deal with any one in want of money," said Laura. "But you must take it in hand. It must be your interest as well as mine, for you no doubt suppose Madge gains by it. Do this business for me, and I will pay all expenses, provided it does not exceed two hundred pounds. I could not afford more. And once we know the contents, I've a pretty good idea that it will be found when wanted."

"Perhaps you know where it is," said Lawrence.

"Perhaps I can guess, but all I now want is to know its contents. I wonder," she said, maliciously, "you never wanted to do that yourself."

Lawrence shrugged his shoulders.

"Without my wife, of what use would it be; and besides, no doubt, everything would be tied up so well that I should be a dependent on her charity."

"But her charity would no doubt be great," said Laura. "Have you no clue yet?"

Lawrence reflected. Laura had been treacherous in the past, but henceforth her strongest passion would be vengeance, and he, and he alone, could help her. He would trust her, for she might become of infinite use to him.

"Yes," he said, "I fancy I at last know where she is going to be, and I have to watch in Ireland for her."

[&]quot; Ah!"

"Yes." He then told her what he had discovered. "And," he added, "if I need your aid, will you come?"

"I will. Henceforth we are in the same boat. I suppose we understand each other, and that you will need the 'sinews of war?'" Going to her davenport she wrote for a moment; then handing him a slip, she said: "There is a check for half the amount; the remainder I will pay when I get the information."

As Lawrence placed it in his pocket-book he heard a delicious voice singing below.

"Do you lodge here?" he asked.

"Yes; I have this drawing-floor. A lady, a professional singer, owns the house."

As Lawrence descended the stairs the singing ceased. He was entirely engrossed in his own thoughts, or he would have noticed an open door, and in the room a lady, who, catching sight of him as he passed it, started violently, rushed to the window and watched him get into the hansom in waiting. This lady wore Cicely's fatal ring.

Laura had looked after him contemptuously.

"As if I could suppose he did not know the contents of that will! Go to Dublin? Of couse, I will; but not, perhaps, to help him. But he may help me. Once Madge is with me, and I am once more her best friend, to stand between her and her husband; and then with that will found or in my power, as I intend, it shall be to find or not to find. I will see whether my Lord Ferrars will marry the penniless girl of rank or the woman who can make

him either rich or poor as she may please; and I haven't much to doubt which he will choose."

Her bosom swelled with exultation at the thought, but her self-communings were interrupted by a tap at the door, and then there entered either Cicely or some one so like her that none could tell them apart.





CHAPTER XV.

"Terry, pack up my traps. I am going to Dublin."

Terry's eyes grew wide with joy. To Dublin. He packed with a will, and St. John and he started the day after the former had discovered Lorrimer was going to Ireland.

No sooner had they reached the city than he made such inquiries as assured him Lorrimer had not arrived, and then he watched every incoming train from England; and it was not till two days after that he saw Lorrimer helping her he called his wife, much changed, but still recognizable to one expecting her, out of a first-class carriage. He watched them get into a side-car, and, hailing one himself, he followed them to a hotel, and then, entering it, he engaged a room and entered his name just after they had left the office. He saw only "Miss Doyle and maid." He knew men of Lorrimer's temperament well enough to know so long

as he kept himself informed of his whereabouts he would be not far from Madge; and then he waited in the coffee-room till he saw Lorrimer leave, and followed him to the Queen's, where he himself was staying. Once there, he sat down to think out his plans.

Possession of Madge was to be his first step; then the abstracted will, which alone made that possession an object, must be accidentally found at Melford. Unless her love for him should be dead, which he did not fear, he believed he could reconquer her, overcome her jealousy of Cicely and make her live with him. Of what she might have seen at Melford he had only a vague idea. Had he not tied his silk handkerchief over his head and face before coming from behind that curtain in such a way that only his eyes were visible? No; even if she had seen she would not recognize him. He believed her reason for going away and keeping silence might be because, believing herself no wife, she covered with shame. Yet he hesitated to go to her. There was the possibility that she did know. Pshaw! Was it not more probable, when he should go to her and convince her, as he meant to do, that she was actually his wife, that the girl she had overheard was only an old acquaintance who persisted in annoying him, that she would be overcome with joy and gratitude? And, if not, the law was on his side. As to Lorrimer, she was too young and beautiful to have a champion of his age. Could he not justify anything he might find it necessary to do by pointing out the fact that she

had left him, her husband, and reached Dublin with another man? If she wanted to defy him, surely he had a good story against her.

At all events now he knew where she was. Why delay going to her? His finances would soon be again in a low state, and he must replenish them. He had had a stroke of luck with cards after getting Laura's hundred pounds. He at first-until Lord Ferrars's will was read-had ample credit on the strength of his marriage, which he was careful to make known, and equally careful to conceal the fact that he had never lived one hour with his wife; but he had lost that now, and he had so much to spend to bolster his credit that he saw the day near when he would be in a debtor's prison unless he could get a great deal of money. It was getting on toward night, yet he seized his hat and went to the hotel where Madge was, and asked for her as Miss-Doyle.

To Madge there could be but one gentleman who would ask for her by that name; and although she had been resting on the couch, she rose to receive Lorrimer, as she supposed, wondering what could bring him. Unsuspiciously she entered the sitting-room, and there standing, his back to the light, was the man whose wife she feared she was.

For a moment she seemed struck to stone. Then, when he came toward her with outstretched arms and face full of tender reproach and uttered her name, she drew back.

"No, no; do not touch me! How dare you come? How dare you?"

"Dare! Madge, my wife, what do you mean?"

"Mean! Wife! Oh, it cannot be that I am your wife! It cannot be!" she said wildly.

"My little Madge," he said, advancing toward her, "I come to explain that terrible mistake. You heard, unhappily, a woman who has been the bane of my existence. I once promised, when a schoolboy, to marry her, and did not keep the promise. You can guess the rest."

"Oh, don't tell me that! Oh, to be the wife of my father's murderer! Anything—any fate, any shame—rather than that!"

It was said. And he knew the worst. Madge had chosen war. He turned white, and then he said:

"Yes, you are my wife, and I, as your husband, shall keep you near me for the future. Remember, whatever you say about your father's death will be but the ravings of a lunatic. Now, madam, I am going down to register your right name on the books. If you make any fuss, I publish the fact of your elopement with Lorrimer. I have a room in this house already, but I think, as our means are limited, this suite will be sufficient. Reflect, accept the inevitable gracefully, and you will not find me a bad husband. Kick against it, and you will find me your master."

His tone was low, for he meant to seem a kind, forbearing husband to outsiders; but Madge heard him and shuddered. She was still weak from her recent illness, and it seemed now as if she must faint, and yet she dared not be helpless in this man's presence.

He walked across the room and entered her chamber. A burning blush rose to her cheek. She was such a mere girl that the idea of a man entering her room filled her with dismay; but she remembered this man was her husband. Ah, frightful truth! And in despair she saw him enter. It was the sign of his power over her. He returned.

"You have a maid. I will get a room in the house for her. Where is she?"

Madge made no answer. Jennie was at her tea, and she was wishing she would return. It seemed as if the presence of any third person would be something to cling to, to save her; so she hardly heard St. John's question. He did not repeat it, but went downstairs, locking the door after him.

Jennie, sitting at her tea in the hotel room designed for valets and maids, was somewhat startled by seeing that a good-looking young man seated opposite her was looking at her with very evident admiration. Jennie was pretty, and knew it. Terry, for he was the good-looking admirer, had an eye to beauty, and he was thinking how bright her complexion was and how white her teeth, when an elderly lady's-maid, evidently familiar with the house, who had just come down, said:

"We are likely to have some excitement in the house, I hear. It seems Miss Doyle is, after all, the Lady Margaret St. John we have all heard so much about; and her husband has just found her out. I met him coming from the office, and as nice and gentlemanly a man as ever you see he is."

Terry had hastily put down his cup, ejaculating under his breath:

"Be me sowl, an' that 's what we 're here for?"

He observed that more than one of the Abigails, present had looked at Jennie, and one said: "Your lady is a pretty sly one." And he knew then she was Lady Madge's maid.

Jennie rose, trembling, and said:

"I think I shall be needed; Lady Margaret has been very ill and can't be left."

Terry rose also, and, by a coincidence they met in the long, dark corridor leading to the stairs going up.

"I beg pardon, miss," said Terry, in his best manner, "but I'm a friend of your swate lady, an' it was mesilf got her away before from that vill'in who's me master. If there's anything I can do, let me know it unbeknownst to any one."

"Oh, I am glad. She has need of friends, but she has one true friend here, if I could only send to him."

"I'm your man. I'll not be wanted in a hurry, an' if I was I wouldn't care."

"Oh, thank you." She then gave the card Lorrimer had given her in case of emergency. "Will you go to that gentleman and tell him all you know?"

"That will I in a jiffy, for your sake and the sake of that swate, ill-used craythur!"



CHAPTER XVI.

The lady who had knocked on Laura's door after St. John left her was the one who owned the house, the professional singer, Mrs. Mortimer. The two were in very pleasant relations as landlady and lodger. Laura, in spite of her wicked heart, could be very fascinating and attractive to both men and women, and the young widow was lovely, and had taken a fancy to her lodger.

"Dear Miss Perceval," she said, as she entered, her eyes full of excitement, "will you excuse a

question I must ask?"

"Ask a dozen. I will answer them if I can."

"Who is that gentleman who has just gone out? Ah, if you knew what I could tell you, if it is the one I think, you would never receive him again."

Laura smiled.

"I know a great many things about that gentleman. He is Captain St. John."

"Yes, yes; I knew it was. Oh, the villain! The

villain!"

"Tell me what you mean!"

"But, if he is a friend of yours—though can he be any honest woman's friend?" she said bitterly.
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"Never mind my friendship; that would sustain a strong shock, I assure you."

"Well, then, I will tell you a cruel story in as

few words as possible:

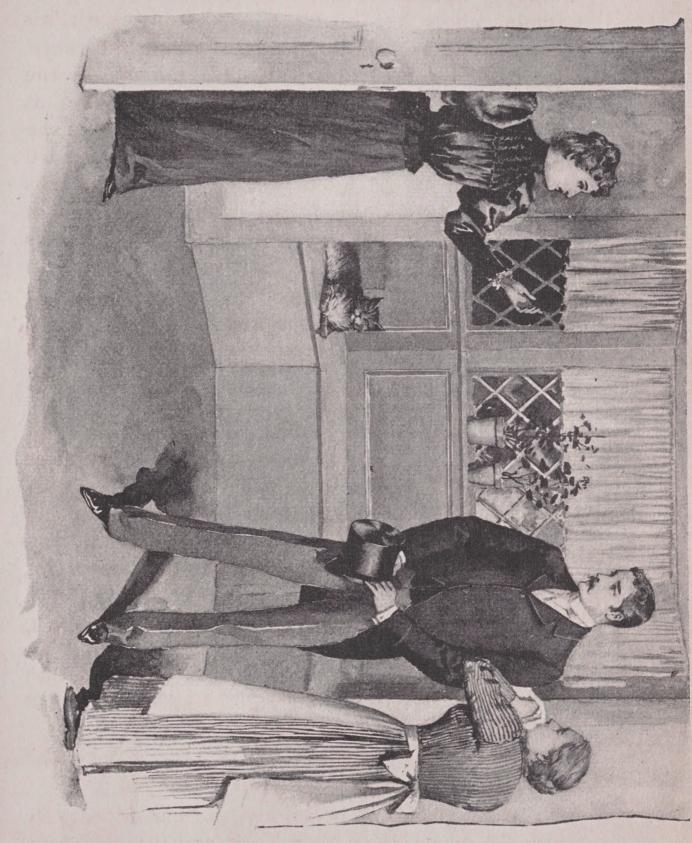
"My mother, myself and my two sisters lived on the bank of the Isis not far from Oxford, and my mother, being very fond of having us admired, and believing by our beauty we would make fine marriages, in spite of our lack of education, used to dress us well and allow us great liberty. My sister and I were alike enough to be twins, and were constantly taken one for the other. Well, foolish as my mother's calculations were, in my case they were partly justified—that is, I married a gentleman far above me in social rank. But as my father had only been a respectable Oxford tradesman, and had left my mother just enough to live on, that was a very easy matter. But Mr. Mortimer, though of good family, had very little money. However, he got an appointment abroad, and I went with him. Soon after my marriage, my sister became acquainted with a young man named St. John. He was visiting Oxford, and some of the students, several of whom knew us, brought him to our house while boating, and, to make a long story short, he fell in love with my sister, and she with him; and one day she disappeared. For years we heard nothing of her; then came a letter, after my mother died, to me. I had returned to England then. My husband had died, and I was preparing to make use of my one gift-my voice-to make my living. Cicely, in her letter, told me she was married, but was very

unhappy, and she was on the eve of starting for Canada, where her husband was going with his regiment; and she hoped, when she had him there, he would treat her better. She begged me, by the old tender love, to write to her and address her as 'Mrs. Varley, Toronto, Canada.' Her husband, she stated, was unable to acknowledge his marriage till the death of an old uncle" [Laura smiled at this figment] "on whom his future prospects depended. I heard next from her, telling me her husband's regiment had been ordered home; but he had taken her to New York, and liked the people and city so much he meant to sell out and return. She wrote more hopefully and said he was much kinder to her. I had other letters from New York, still speaking hopefully of his rejoining her; but as the time went by and he did not sell out of his regiment nor return to her, I suppose she lost patience and came over, for she loved him dearly. The next I heard of her was a letter from London, telling me she had just seen St. John, that he had been very kind and glad to see her and that he had given her a ring.

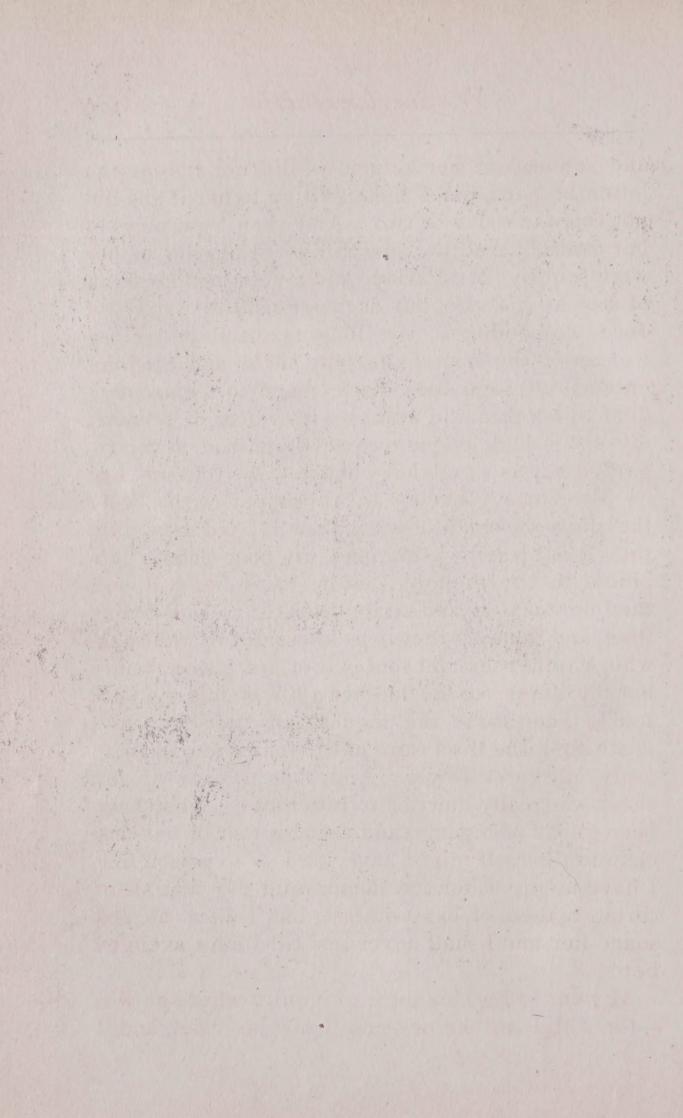
"'Which I send you, dear sister, for I am not feeling well, and such a ring is not safe in these lodgings. Besides, if St. John get short of money, he may ask for it again, and I don't want to give it. So keep it till I come and see you, which will be directly I feel better."

Mrs. Mortimer had read from a letter, which she now returned to her pocket, and continued:

"I was then living at Henley, and had repeatedly begged her to leave New York and live with me,



"MY FATHER IS DEAD! I AM SURE OF IT!"-See Page 69.



and rejoiced at her return. I did not answer the letter at once, for I meant to go to her if she did not come in a day or two. And then I got news of her death! And the few things belonging to her were sent by 'Mr. Varley,' and a note, not speaking of her as his wife, but as 'your sister.' I went at. once to London to the lodgings, and found the woman of the house knew my sister and St. John only as 'Mr. and Mrs. Varley,' and it seemed evident to me that the woman with whom, it seemed, my sister had lodged years before, had never regarded her as a married woman. She told me, too, of 'Mr. Varley' having taken supper with Cicely the night before she was taken ill, and how jolly they had been together, and my poor sister's happiness in the thought that he loved her still, and then her sudden and strange death. I had doubts then, and I swore never to lose sight of the man, who, whether she met foul play or not, was certainly her murderer, for he led her a life of misery, poor soul! Then came the inquest on Lord Ferrars's death and the disclosure of St. John's marriage to Lady Margaret Doyle. And then I knew if my sister was really married to him that he must have been guilty of bigamy, and that his fear of her proclaiming herself might have led him to poison her. I have no proof, for the doctor said my poor sister certainly died of heart-disease, but I know he poisoned her, and I shall never rest till I have avenged her!

"I went to his chambers to inquire where he was —for I did not know—and I saw his valet, and I

found he took me for Cicely, and I allowed him to think so, because I learned, from what he said, that my sister had been there and had caused trouble to Lady Margaret, and the man seemed to be much more anxious to learn that I was his master's actual wife than that I was not. It was not my wish to see the villain till I had matured my plans, but coming downstairs, I saw a gentleman enter—instinct told me it was St. John. I passed, and looked him full in the face, and saw him turn white and stagger and sink into a seat. He thought he had seen a ghost. Now you know all, and on coming to think, I suppose you are the Miss Perceval so often mentioned in that case of Lord Ferrars's murder."

"Yes, I am," said Laura, "and it may be that some day I can help you to your vengeance on St.

John."

"Do that, and I'll do anything for you," said Mrs. Mortimer.

The next evening Laura got a letter from St. John, as follows:

"DEAR LAURA: I have learned contents of will. Gerald is left one thousand pounds a year. Madge two thousand pounds per annum, and the bulk of the property to go to her children, should she have any, or in case of her surviving me, to go to her. In the event of her death, the whole goes to charity. Your legacy is repeated. I am about to start for Ireland, for I must find Madge. If you will aid me, you may be well avenged, and enriched, too."

"I must go to Ireland, too," muttered Laura.

"Madge must be as much in my power as his."

That evening she started for Dublin.



CHAPTER XVII.

When Lorrimer heard from Terry that St. John was with Lady Madge, he was for a moment full of despair. What could he do? What power had he against her husband?

"What is to be done to save her?" he muttered half aloud, oblivious of the fact that Terry stood before him.

"Well, sir," said Terry, as composedly as if the question had been addressed to him, "I'm your man for anything you want to do. It w'u'd not be the first time Terry McCarthy has helped to get that lady out of a hole, as you will see if you look at me."

Lorrimer turned quickly.

"Are you the good fellow who took pity on her and helped me at Victoria? Of course you are. I see now. How do you do?" he said, shaking hands.

"I am that same," said Terry, modestly.

"Then I shall rely on you to help me again. But what can any one do against her husband? I'd lay down my life for her, but of what avail?"

"Whisht! I'm none so sure that he is her husband."

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"What!" shouted Lorrimer. "What do you say?"

Terry then related the story of Cicely, and then

said:

"Poor lady! She felt so awful bad to be a wife, and just no wife at all, that I told her, to comfort her, that the young woman was one av them sort as call themselves wives whether they are or no; and she belaved me. But—heaven forgive me—I didn't belave it meself whin I said it, for the capt'in w'u'd never have been so scared if she hadn't some hold on him; and more betoken, I've heard worse about that same."

But Lorrimer did not hear his last words. Not his wife! Was it possible Madge might not be married! The thought was almost too joyful. He feared to entertain it, the reverse would be so great. But, wife or no wife, something had to be done that very night to relieve her. Lorrimer begged Terry to keep watch, and the moment she was alone to get her from the hotel and take her in a carriage to a place agreed on, and to get Jennie's coöperation. Lorrimer would remain where he was. He began to see how his being near her might compromise her.

Terry promised faithfully to do as he was directed, but he did not take into account the fact that St. John was fully on his guard against him.

When he reached the hotel he found Jennie was looking out for him. She was weeping, and told him Mr. St. John had just paid her wages and dismissed her; that Lady Madge had in vain wept

and entreated him to let her remain; he had refused.

"And what can I do?" she tearfully asked.

"Ah, the villain! Well, there's on'y wan thing yez can do—stick to yer lady's interests, if yer can't to herself. Now go off to Mr. Lorrymore and ax him for his advice, me darlint."

Jennie thought this such a good idea that she started off. Had she waited a few minutes she might have had some other information to give.

Terry went to Mr. St. John's rooms, but found he had changed and was in those engaged for Lady Madge. Thither he repaired. At the door he was met by St. John, who said:

"I find you have played me false, you scoundrel! You are no longer in my service; leave as soon as you can; pack up and come to-morrow for your wages!"

Utterly taken aback, afraid to say a word, for fear of making matters worse for Madge, he stood dumb.

St John turned his back and reëntered the room. It was the sitting-room, but Madge was not there. She had gone to her bedroom and barricaded herself in. St. John had done nothing to prevent that, but had smiled grimly.

When he had gone downstairs to give notice of his change of rooms, while Jennie and Terry were quietly taking their tea, ignorant that the lady they both loved so well was locked in her apartments, St. John had written the following note:

"DEAR WATSON: I want you to do me a service. I fear my wife is a lunatic needing restraint; please bring me a medical

friend you can rely on and tell me what is the matter. Inclosed are the ten pounds I owe you."

This note he had dispatched by messenger to an ex-army surgeon who had left the service, not willingly, it was whispered, and who, failing to establish a practice, got his living now in devious ways. The recollection of this useful man it was that made him rejoice in his wife's going to Dublin, where he had a tool.

Scarcely had Terry left the door than the two doctors arrived. St. John came toward them as they entered the room.

"I am glad you have come so promptly. I am in a difficult position. You know, I dare say, that my wife ran away from me soon after our marriage and has evaded me ever since. I knew she was very peculiar, and when that happened, I concluded she was insane; everything confirms that view. And, if that were all, I should simply watch over her, but I find I can only avert a terrible scandal by putting her under restraint, at least for a few weeks. She arrived here in company with a gentleman," he said, in low, meaning tones, "and I wish, without blemishing her name, to save her. Her mental state is such that I am convinced you will agree with me she is not accountable for her actions."

Doctor Watson looked at him with an understanding leer, and St. John went to Madge's door.

"Madge, please open to me."

No answer.

"Come, Madge, this is nonsense. You may be sure I shall open the door. It is only a matter of a

few minutes, more or less, and you will be wiser to open. Two friends of mine are here whom I wish you to become acquainted with."

Then the door opened slowly and Lady Madge came out.

She was dressed in a flowing white wrapper; her face was deathly pale, her eyes wore a hunted, frightened expression, and her short, disheveled hair all tended to make her look distraught.

Even men with an honest desire to find her sane might, if they had been told she was mad, have found the story strengthened by her appearance; but these men had no wish to find her sane. They knew they were there to pronounce her insane, and in a few minutes their pliant minds had seen enough to convince them.

St. John left the room with them.

Ten minutes later he had a certificate of Lady Madge's insanity and the address of an asylum very near the city, where she would be received without too much scrutiny.

St. John had hastily resolved on this action, knowing that whenever he had prepared the way she would be under his hand.

Terry stood some seconds as St. John left him, and then resolved to wait till he saw Jennie, who had promised to return and tell the result of her interview with Lorrimer. He feared to leave Lady Margaret with her husband alone, and determined to keep watch on the room. He saw the two doctors enter and leave, and then a waiter was rung for. As the latter left the room, having received his

order, Terry accosted him and discovered that Captain St. John had ordered a close carriage.

"Ah," thought Terry, "he is going to carry the darlint away, and Mr. Lorrymore never to know it. But sure what could he do? But it's meself 'll know

where the carriage goes, too, anny way."

He told the waiter, whom he knew slightly, to let him get the carriage, which the man agreed to do; and then he ran out, made a certain arrangement with the driver, by which the latter gained half a crown and Terry a ride on the footboard.





CHAPTER XVIII.

When St. John returned to the room he saw Madge, standing white and ghost-like, wistfully looking out of the window.

"Madge!" he said in a conciliatory tone. "I am

obliged to go away suddenly."

He watched her under his eyelids, and saw her

visibly brighten at hearing this.

"But," he continued, "I cannot have you in this hotel to which you were brought by a man. Have you any acquaintance in this city to whom you can go for the present?"

"Oh, yes, several!" said Lady Madge, eagerly. Oh, if she might only be spared that man's com-

pany!

"Well, get ready, and I will take you; but there

must be no sending to Lorrimer."

"No, no! I give you my word if you will leave me, I will stay where you wish, do what you wish. I will do anything!"

His lips curled.

"That is complimentary. Anything to be rid of me! Well, so be it. I will see if you are not kinder when I have time to be with you."

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Madge went into the inner room and put on her walking-clothes and returned. She was almost joyful at this escape from living even as a day as the wife of St. John. She loathed herself that she was even civil to him, and did not denounce him; but she was so terribly weak and nervous, she could not make up her mind what was right or wrong in the case.

"Where will you go?" asked St. John. "I will go and see about a carriage."

His object was to get her away quietly from the hotel, and under the belief that she was going to a friend she would go willingly. She mentioned a lady whom, as Madge was never to reach her house, it matters not to name, and St. John left the rooms. The carriage had arrived, and he went to direct the coachman to drive to a certain private lunatic asylum in the suburbs and warn him that the lady he was to drive was insane; that he must not take any notice if she should cry out or attempt to get through the carriage-window.

He slipped a sovereign into the man's hand to purchase his good will, and then returned to Madge. who was trembling with eagerness to go to her friend.

Only this morning she had dreaded to see any one who had ever known her; but any evil now seemed preferable to the terrible one of being forced to live with the man she had married.

She descended to the carriage, followed by St. John. When seated, she leaned back and closed her eyes.

The belief that she was to be reprieved from her hideous fate was so grateful to her that she felt for the moment at rest.

She knew Dublin well, and that the house to which she was going was very near the hotel. She was first roused from the quiescent state in which she had fallen by the thought that they seemed to have come a long way. She looked out, and saw they were in a part of the city quite unfamiliar to her—certainly not in the direction of her friend's house.

"This man is going wrong," she said. "Stop him, please."

"Let him alone; he knows his way," said St. John, quietly.

"But this is *not* the way," said Lady Madge. She had no distrust as yet, for she believed St. John was merely thinking the driver knew his own business better than she did; but when she found she could not induce him to expostulate, she began to fear. Her heart beat. What if she had been only entrapped into leaving the hotel, so that her one staunch friend might lose traces of her? She sat silent a few minutes, refusing to credit her fears, and then she took the matter in her own hands.

They had turned a corner, and she perceived they were driving along the Grand Canal and she recognized the road to Clondalkin.

She shook the windows in front. St. John forced her back into her seat, but she cried desperately:

"Stop! Stop!" with all the power of her voice.

"I will go no farther! I will not be taken-"

St. John's small hand was pressed to her mouth.

In vain she struggled, his arm was fast round her neck, his hand on her lips.

The struggle was very short, for, succumbing to her terror and her weakness, she fainted.

Poor, poor Lady Madge! Where were her zealous friends now?

Before she had regained her senses they reached a pair of iron gates, over which a lamp swung, and the carriage turned in and drove up a long sweep to a great dreary, white house, with closely grated windows—a house that would have appalled a stouter heart than hers, had she been able to see it.

St. John got out of the carriage and asked to see the proprietor. A few words only passed between them, and two stout women were called, and unhappy Madge was carried through those grim portals, over which might well have been written Dante's words:

"Renounce hope all who enter here!"





CHAPTER XIX.

Lorrimer heard Terry's story in silence. He knew how little he could do against St. John, armed with a husband's terrible authority.

He had eagerly heard Terry's hint as to the possibility that Lady Madge's marriage was no marriage at all; but he could not use this suspicion until he had made inquiries, and to do that he must go or write to London.

No, all he could do *now* was to go to the hotel and, if possible, see Madge, even in her husband's presence. Now, too, that he was with her, he could take a room in the hotel and, to a certain extent, watch over her.

"Jennie," he said, "you come with me and wait in the carriage outside, while I go in and see Lady Madge. You may be needed."

Jennie was agreeable to anything that would help her dear mistress, and they started. Jennie had walked to Mr. Lorrimer's hotel, and when she reached it she had to wait some little time before he came. He had been to consult a lawyer whom he knew in the city, and learned he could do absolutely nothing, which, however, he had known be-

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fore. This delay, however, brought them to the Queen's Hotel a few minutes after the carriage containing Madge and her husband had driven away.

When Lorrimer heard that they had both gone out, he knew not what to think. Tired as she was, Madge would never have gone out if she could have helped it. She had gone willingly; therefore there was treachery at work. He looked and inquired for Terry, and, not finding him, felt relieved, for he felt sure he had done as he had been requested —had gone after them.

There seemed nothing to be done then but to wait for him; any step he took prematurely might be in a wrong direction. He went out to the carriage in which Jennie was seated and told her to remain there to watch if Terry came, and he would go inside and do the same. He was very anxious now to avoid being seen by St. John, and he therefore asked for a private room, and told the waiter as a pretext that he wanted to engage Mr. St. John's former valet when he should come in, and desired he might be sent to him when he returned. He had what seemed to him a long time to wait, and he was beginning to fear that Terry might be waiting at the Gresham for him, when the valet was shown in.

His look was wildly excited; he did not wait for Lorrimer to speak, but exclaimed directly he saw him:

"Ah, Mr. Lorrymore, sir, he's got her away, but, bad cess to him, I know where she is, an' we'll get her again! Oh, the poor darlint! An' she was

faintin' when she was carried into the house, though I heard her in the carriage a-beggin' and a-intreatin' not to go."

"But Terry, why did-"

"Ah, thin, sir, what c'u'd I do against her husban'? Sure, ye said yerself no one c'u'd interfere openly: but, though me heart was broke, I thought it was better to keep onto the back av the carriage an' see where she went than expose meself to be sint back, and do her no good at all, at all!"

"Right, Terry; very right! You had more sense than I had, but where is she? Tell me all!"

Terry then related how he had gone behind the carriage till it stopped at a large house about a mile this side of Clondalkin, and though Lady Madge had been heard to struggle against going further long before she got so far, there had suddenly come a silence, and she was carried out by two women, a gentleman coming outside to the carriage and seeming to superintend them.

"What sort of a house was it?" asked Lorrimer.

"A great, dreary-lookin' house, and the name av 'Doctor Marsh' was on the gate. I didn't dare go in the gate, for I didn't want to be seen; so I just looked through an' saw all. An' whin the carriage came out wid Mr. St. John, behint I jumped up ag'in. An' here I am."

"Well done, Terry! Stay here. No! Jennie is waiting in a carriage below. She must be tired. Do you know anywhere that she can lodge comfortably? I hope we shall have need of her services

for Lady Madge again before long; but she must have a home meanwhile."

"Leave her to me, sir. I'll take her to a decent lodging kept by a friend of me own, in a jiffy."

"That's right! Take the carriage, and then, when you have settled her all right, go to the Gresham and wait for me. You can enter my service from to-night; but we'll talk of that later. I am going now to see who Doctor Marsh is."

Lorrimer forced himself to be calm. He counted very much on Terry's coöperation; but he saw how excitable he was, and that if he allowed himself to show his agitation the other might become reckless. And, of all things, caution seemed most necessary now.

He went downstairs with Terry to assure Jennie she would be looked after, and then he returned to the office of the hotel, and found, to his horror, that Doctor Marsh kept a private lunatic asylum, about which many strange stories were told.

He understood all now. There was not a doubt of what had happened, and he could do nothing. If he went and swore that she was sane, of what avail would it be? Her husband had placed her there. He guessed by what means. Oh, the unutterable torture of the thought that this lovely girl, so innocent, so blameless, was even now enduring the horror of hearing the terrible sounds uttered by her fellow-captives! And knowing herself sane, to be there, and none to help her! She would not even know that he was aware of her peril, or she might be sure he would succor her at his life's cost. But

to-night nothing could be done; it was already too late; but to-morrow, please God, she should know at least she was not deserted.

But all the misery Lorrimer's imagination depicted fell far short of the fact.

Lady Madge's first awakening to consciousness was a shock of feeling ice-cold water dashed roughly in her face. She was in a bare little room with whitewashed walls, the blinding light from a gas jet, without glass or globe, pouring down on her, and two gaunt, forbidding-looking women were standing over her.

"Where am I?" she asked, bewildered by the strange surroundings.

"Come! You just ask no questions and ye'll hear no stories," said one of the women, grimly. "Come, get up and get this toggery off!"

Madge rose from her recumbent position, and found she had been lying on a wretched cot-bed so dirty that the delicately nurtured lady started from it. It seemed horrible to have come in contact with it. But who could these women be who spoke to her in such a manner? They must be making some mistake.

"Thank you. I have been ill, I suppose. I am sorry to have troubled you. I will do so no longer. Can you tell me where I shall find Mr. St. John?"

"We don't know any Mr. St. John. We've got to look after you, and it's time we were in bed. New patients coming this time of night—I've no patience with 'em!" said the other woman.

"What do you mean? What can you mean? Am I in a hospital?"

"Here, come now, stop yer jaw, if yer don't know

now, yer soon will. Come, undress!"

Both women took hold of her, one at each side, but Madge's blood rose at the idea of those coarse creatures touching her, and she bounded from them.

"How dare you touch me?" She turned the handle of the door to go out of the room, but the loud laugh of the women showed her even before she found it locked that her effort was in vain.

That she had been brought to this place by St. John for some vile purpose she saw plainly enough, but she believed, once they knew who she was, they would not detain her. Poor Lady Madge had been accustomed to see everything give way to her rank. She could not believe it would be different, now she was in her own country.

Turning to the women she said, gently:

"There is some mistake. Do you know who I am?"

"A princess, I dare say," said one, with a derisive sneer. "Them as comes here most generally are. Come, Bet, let's get her settled for the night."

"What do you mean? What can you mean? For the night?" I will not stay here for the night!"

By way of answer, the woman called Bet and the other, whose name was Jane, seized her and began vigorously taking off her clothes in spite of her resistance, and when it came to the point of removing her dress, Madge struggled so violently and screamed

so loudly for assistance, that one of them made a hasty sign, the other put her hand in her pocket and drew forth a gag, which was thrust into Madge's tender mouth with cruel force. Her resistance had angered the women, and they wrenched her arms savagely as they removed her garments one after the other.

"Now, my fine madam, you can hear, if you can't speak. If we've any capers, on goes the strait-jacket!"

They threw over her a coarse night-dress, and pointing to the bed, took away her outer clothes and left the room. The cruel gag was still in her mouth, but she could remove it. Her hands were free. She put her hand behind her head to unfasten it, but found it was impossible. By some infernal contrivance it fastened with a spring, and she could not remove it.

Was it possible she was to pass the night with that painful thing in her mouth? And—ah, that loathsome bed! No, she could not lie on it.

The light had been turned out, and now the moon streamed in through the grated window. She went toward it and looked out. Oh, to be out in that free air! What could be the end of this? Was she brought here to be killed? Surely, it would not take much to kill her! Fortunately, or unfortunately, the physical pain from the gag and the misery of being tired and weak and no place but the floor to lie on, prevented her mental distress injuring her so much as it might otherwise have done. She could not think long on one point without being

stopped by a sense of pain and making some effort to relieve it. She sat down on the floor in a patch of moonlight, and then, when tired of that position. she lay down. How slowly that endless night passed! How could she ever endure another? On collecting her thoughts and remembering the women, and what they had said, she knew she must be in an insane asylum. But why did she hear nothing-none of the woeful sounds she had always associated with lunacy? Then she remembered her own state, the gag. Could it be that all were gagged, or had the knowledge of its pain wrought a painful fear? Involuntarily her thoughts turned to Lorrimer, and with a tender pleasure she knew if he could but learn her peril he would rescue her. How could she let him know it?





CHAPTER XX.

When St. John returned to the hotel, after having got rid of Madge, and come to an understanding with Doctor Marsh, his first care was to possess himhimself of Madge's jewels, which were very costly -diamonds that in consequence of her youth she had never worn, but which had come to her from her mother. These, being family jewels, he knew must be unmounted, for such remarkable gems would not be bought without question in their entirety. This was one reason why it was a relief to him to place her in safe-keeping till he had arranged for things so that she could claim her father's money without suspicion, or rather, he meant so to manage that, the will being found, she would be sought for to take possession, and then he would bring her forward. Meanwhile she was safe; she could not, to justify her renouncing him, accuse him of her father's murder. No, she was safe so long as Marsh was paid to take care of her.

He ransacked her trunks and took from them everything of value, then repacked them, and had them sent to the station. The next morning, early,

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he paid his own and Lady Madge's bill, and went to London.

It was with a feeling of relief that Lorrimer heard that he was gone; if anything was to be done, there would be no fear of having his plans frustrated by him. Yet what those plans were to be he could not guess; his natural impulse was to go at once to the asylum and ask to see the patient, but he did not need to be told that he would not know under what name to ask for her, for St. John would certainly not leave her under her right one, and then if he made unsuccessful application to see her, he would but put the attendants on their guard. No, better to have patience till some plan which would have a good result could be carried out.

Happily for his peace of mind, no idea of the horrors of rough usage and dirt to which she was subject crossed his mind. The confinement as insane was the worst he feared; gratuitous cruelty seemed improbable.

But in vain he ransacked his brain for a plan to let her know friends were active on her behalf. At last he called Terry and asked if he could suggest any likely plan. Terry scratched his head and shook it slowly. Then he looked bright.

"I don't know; but I think I have a way to let the lady know; an' if it don't work, no harm will be done."

"Let us hope it will work, then."

Terry related in a few minutes the idea he had, which Lorrimer thought might answer; at least it could be tried, and once she had heart and hope to bear up, he could arrange some plan for taking her away.

* * * * * * *

Unconscious of any effort being made in her behalf, the unhappy Lady Madge went through that night of physical and mental agony, and the morning found her, almost lifeless, still on the floor of her room. The fact that she had so passed the night seemed to enrage the human fiends who had to attend on her. They removed the gag, and then asked her why she had not been to bed, and, with her poor mouth aching, her delicate lips swollen and black, the wretched girl could not for a minute speak.

"Come, no shamming, or I'll rouse yer," said she called Bet. "This ain't the place to give yerself airs and make yerself ill for us to wait on yer."

Madge gave a frightened look at the dreadful woman, whose manner seemed to threaten violence; and so broken was Madge's dauntless spirit by illness, suffering and loss of sleep that the tears coursed down her cheeks.

"I could not sleep on those sheets-I could not."

"I reckon you will, or we'll know the reason why to-night. Here, put on this here gownd," she said, handing her a coarse, gray woolen one, which, however, seemed new and clean, to Madge's relief. And then the women left the room.

"Why am I not to have my own clothes?" she

thought.

She did not know that Doctor Marsh ostentatiously invited inspection now and then of his patients, and that such as were not to be scrutinized too closely were made to look vulgar and commonplace by ugly, coarse dresses, no visitor supposing they did not belong to the wearer. Madge was so lovely, so evidently a person of distinction, that she could not have escaped notice if any curious visitor should come; but if she were vulgarly dressed only her pretty face would remain, and that would not remain pretty long within those walls. Doctor Marsh and his satellites well knew how powerless beauty of form is to show itself through an ill-fitting garment.

A great bell soon rang after she was dressed, and Bet came to the room and roughly bade her come to breakfast.

So weak she could hardly drag one foot before another, Madge yet welcomed the announcement. She would see more of the place she was in, and whether everything was as terrible as it seemed now. She followed Bet along a corridor and into a large room, with a long table in the center. On this table was a huge dish of oatmeal porridge and tumblers of milk at every place. Madge was placed next a little woman with bright eyes and a brisk, birdlike manner. Madge eagerly drank the milk, her terrible experience of the past night causing a devouring thirst; but the porridge she could not touch, nor, indeed, any food.

She looked along the table; there were about twenty women seated; and the two women, Jane and Bet, waited on them. Even to Madge's inexperienced eye it was evident that the greater part of them were insane. Some ate their food in a disgusting manner; others seemed as sane as herself, Her next neighbor on one side was sitting jabbering to herself between each mouthful but the dark-eyed little woman on her left seemed unusually intelligent. Presently she spoke.

"How do you like the aspect of things?" she

asked.

"Not at all," said Madge, in reply to the query of her neighbor at the table as to how she liked the aspect of things.

"Hush! Don't let that be heard. Bet has sharp

ears, and she 'll gag you."

Madge shuddered.

"They do that here too much, and that makes it the quietest house in the country. Observe that poor creature next you: She's as mad as a March hare. That is the saddest part of living here."

Madge looked at her in surprise. Was it possible she, a sane woman, had chosen this as her abode? Yet it was an inexpressible comfort to find there was one sound mind near her.

"Have you lived here long?" asked Madge.

"A few years. I'm studying character. I'm a novelist, and one gets great insight here. You interest me very much, and there must be some history about you, for I see you have on one of the stock gowns. They never do that to real lunatics. Oh, I'm up to every dodge of this place!"

Madge looked at the novelist with great curiosity. What devotion to art it showed to voluntarily come to live in a place like this for the sake of study, but

it seemed strange it should take years to complete her observations; perhaps she remained from habit now. She looked on the little woman with a good deal of respect, nevertheless, and was much startled when she said:

"I'll tell you a secret. I'm going to have a grand transformation scene to-night. I have been planning a surprise for a long time, and I rather think I'll astonish the natives."

Madge had heard of amateur theatricals being gotten up in some asylums, and asked:

"Do they have theatricals here?" thinking of any chance that might realize her hope of making her whereabouts known.

"They never have had, but to-night there will be a very grand affair; red-fire and all the melodramatic etceteras."

When they rose from the breakfast-table, her new friend took her into a large room called the saloon, where all the patients seemed to congregate. It was not long before Madge discovered that her new friend, the novelist, had some very peculiar views, but perhaps that came of being with mad people. While she sat there, a young woman came to her with a doll and begged her to admire her baby, and Madge, full of pity for the poor soul, took the doll and praised it. At this the novelist got quite angry, and scolded the doll's mother, and told her she ought to be ashamed to trouble the Queen of England. Madge looked at her in astonishment. Whereupon the novelist rose, and, making a profound reverence, said:

"Pray, your majesty, do not be uneasy; I shall respect your incognita, and cause it to be respected by others."

Now Madge saw that her "sane" acquaintance was undoubtedly as mad as any of the others. It was a disappointment. A sane woman amidst lunatics! What hope had she? She found out later that the novelist called herself "Miss Braddon," and would answer to no other name

"Miss Braddon" clung to her persistently, referring again and again to her grand transformation scene for that evening, and begged her not to whisper it, or Bet would soon put a stop to it.

"And then there'll be no fun, you know, which would be too bad, for I've been preparing for months."

Madge promised secrecy. She concluded the theatricals were merely a figment of her poor, diseased brain.

During the morning, Miss Braddon took Madge to her room, and Madge found it somewhat more comfortable than her own, though not cleaner; but it faced the front. She had books to read, too, which would make the wretched life in that place more bearable.

Glad to escape her wretched thoughts, Madge opened one of the books—it was a volume of Thackeray—and read a few paragraphs, when she was roused by the sound of a man beneath calling very loudly: "Apples! Oranges!" with the long-drawn cadence peculiar to vendors of those fruits in the old country. She looked through the bars, and the

man turned his face up to the windows as if seeking custom, a very unusual thing for vendors in that vicinity.

She started. Surely that face was familiar! The face, but not the clothes. Yet it must be Terry's. She did not know he had left St. John. Yet his presence caused her heart to beat with hope. It must mean something. But though she had seen him, Terry did not know it.

She saw a man from the house order him out of the yard, and then Terry reeled about like a drunken man and refused to obey. On the man's approaching to put him out, he flung down his basket, letting the fruit roll right and left, and showed fight, yelling and making a terrible noise. The man evidently thought discretion the better part of valor and ran indoors. Then Terry leisurely proceeded to pick up his fruit, singing snatches of song at the top of his voice, and one seemed specially meant for her, as it met her ear. It was a line from the "Pilot:"

"Fear not, but trust in Providence, wherever you may be!"
The apparently drunken man then lurched and reeled out of the courtyard, still shouting at the top of a drunken voice: "Fear not!"

Madge turned from the window with a heart bounding with hope. She knew now that help would come. She felt she could even endure another night such as the last with the certainty that her whereabouts was known!



CHAPTER XXI.

The weak part of Terry's plan, so far as Lorrimer was concerned, was that even after it had been carried out, he was left in doubt as to its success.

Terry related what he had done, when he returned, but could not tell whether Lady Madge had heard him. He had distinctly seen heads crowded at the windows, but he had not dared look long enough to distinguish any one in particular, but if he had not done that, he had some information which might be valuable.

He found that Doctor Marsh's man-servant frequently went in the evening to a small shebeen or public house, near Clondalkin, and he believed by going there himself, he might, by the aid of whisky, make his acquaintance.

This would be something gained, and Lorrimer was glad to hear it, for he hardly could suppose that any one who would serve in such a place would be above a bribe, provided the bribe were heavy enough. But, although this promised an opening, he chafed to think that Madge must remain there in that prison-house till her release could be obtained by strategy. His blood boiled, and it was

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only by remembering the danger there would be in a tour de force that he abstained from trying to force his way to her.

Meanwhile, Terry and Jennie were consulting together, for the gallant Irishman had been much struck with her bonny English face, and was already very much in love with her. He took the pretext that going to carry news to her gave him of seeing her.

"But what she must suffer, that dear young lady," said Jennie. "Oh, if I could only be with her!"

"An' do you know what I've been thinkin', Miss Jennie, if anny one had the courage to do it?"

"What is it? Courage! Why, if there's anything to be done that needs only courage, I'm sure I know two that would have courage enough. There's Mr. Lorrimer would brave anything, and there's me," she said, with a glance out of the corner of her eye at Terry.

"Ah, shure! An' isn't there meself as would make three? But Miss Jennie, dear, it isn't me nor Mr. Lorrymore that must do it, but just yourself, an' I'm afeard for yez."

"What is it? Tell me!" she said, imperiously, for she was too true a woman not to have discovered her power over Terry even before he knew it himself.

"Well, what w'u'd ye say to being where she is?"

"In her place? I'd do it in a minute, because there would be no danger of my being kept there—I'm not of enough consequence."

"I'm ready—if it will help her."

"Don't say a word now till I see Mr. Lorrymore, an' I'm thinkin' he may take yez to the asylum tonight."

Jennie declared she would be ready at a minute's notice, and then, with a tender squeeze of the hand, he left her to broach his scheme to Lorrimer. He knew, although he had had the wit to conceive it, Mr. Lorrimer would have to mature it and carry it out.

Terry returned to the hotel, eager with his plan.

"Mr. Lorrymore, sir, I've an idea, an' if you think well of it, we'll have Lady Margaret here in a few days."

"A few days, Terry! But she will die in a few days or go mad! How can she live and retain her reason through all this suffering for days? We must get her away soon!" he cried, in his impatience.

"Aisy, sir! Aisy! We'll get her, but if a friend can be there with her to keep her heart up, and help us at the same time, that'll give her courage to live in her sinses!"

"Yes, but, my good Terry, who is this friend?"

"Jennie, sir. She and I have talked it over, and she will go to that house as a patient if you will take her, an' she can play mad just a little, so that she'll be trusted, an' thin she can see Lady Margaret, an' tell her you are working for her."

"And will Jennie actually do this?" asked Lorri-

mer, his eye kindling at the thought.

[&]quot;No, not in her place, but with her."

"Yes, sir; I have talked it over. She is willing. She is going to dress up quare, and she 'll pretind to belave she's Doctor Marsh's own wife—that'll seem mad enough for anything."

"Terry, you are a genius! Why did not such an

idea enter my brains?"

Terry, his good-looking face all aglow with gratification at Lorrimer's appreciation and enthusiasm at the idea of being of service to Lady Madge, said:

"Ah, sir, it's because your head's so full of so many things, there isn't so much room for new ideas to enter on a suddent; but the head of a poor fellow like me is just an empty ball, an' there's hapes av room for any notion or the like to get in."

"Terry, you would make a capital courtier. However, we have now to settle our plan. You go and prepare Jennie, and tell her she must be ready this evening to go with me. I will call for her in a carriage. Tell her, for this act of devotion I will take care of her all her life, whatever comes from it."

Terry went on wings to Jennie. Anything that took him to her lent wings to his feet, and even the reflection that, in pursuance of his plan, he was to lose the power of seeing her, perhaps, for two or three days, was not enough to damp him, for he pictured the joy of being the means of rescuing her and Lady Madge; and, knowing her devotion to the latter, he felt his best passport to Jennie's heart was his service to her mistress.



CHAPTER XXII.

If Doctor Marsh's Lunatic Asylum was a very grim place outside and very comfortless within, there was one room in it replete with comfort, and that was the doctor's own sanctum. In the middle of the day after Lady Margaret's incarceration, and after she had renewed hope from having seen Terry, an elegantly-dressed lady called and desired to see him on business.

He ordered her to be shown into his sanctum; then, flinging aside the yellow-covered novel he had been reading, he opened a medical book and seemed to be immersed in study.

The lady entered, and, taking the chair placed for her, said:

"You have a sister-in-law of mine here. My brother, Captain St. John, wished me to call and see her."

The wary doctor looked dubiously at Laura, for it was she, then said, with the utmost politeness:

"I do not know any gentleman of that name. I think you must be mistaken. But with regard to patients under my charge, I have to exercise my

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own discretion in allowing them to be seen; in affections of the mind the less they see of those dear to them the better for their chances of recovery."

Laura smiled at his specious words, uttered so

gravely.

"My sister-in-law must certainly be here, but it may be a necessary discretion on your part to refuse a stranger's request to see her. I will write to my brother, and he will satisfy your doubts."

The doctor now looked more keenly at her; he began to understand that this lady most likely was in connivance with the husband of his patient; at the same time he left no margin for mistakes, and he therefore said, very suavely:

"When I find out who the lady actually is, I shall be delighted, and should it comport with my

duty to the invalid, to let you see her."

Which Laura translated into "When you satisfy me by written evidence that you are not a friend of the 'patient,' but are in collusion against her, you shall see her." And, as she wanted to inspire the doctor with the utmost confidence, she acquiesced gracefully in what she could not help, meaning, nevertheless, to hoodwink the doctor in the end.

About six o'clock the same evening, just as the doctor was beginning his dinner, a gentleman was announced as wishing to see him on business. Now, dinner was a pleasant thing, but Doctor Marsh never allowed pleasure to stand before duty, and he cast a sigh at his steaming soup, and went out to see his visitor. A tall, slender man with brilliant black eyes and grayish hair and a white mustache,

was waiting to see him, and told him he had a patient he wished to place in his care, who was suffering from mental disease. The doctor gravely listened, asked a few questions, learned that the terms would be very liberal, and was quite satisfied at once that the lady ought to be in an asylum.

"What form does this lady's disease take?" he asked.

"Oh, a very mild form. She fancies, just at present, that she is married, and is seeking her husband."

"Ah, well, she will no doubt be benefited by her treatment here. We employ all the latest scientific resources, and make a great many cures."

"She can, perhaps, enter at once?"

Oh, dear, yes. Is the lady so docile as to have waited quietly outside so long?"

"Yes, she is quite calm. You will need to use very little restraint. It is only because she has no home, no one but myself to care for her, that she needs to be put in an asylum at all."

Lorrimer—for, disguised as an elderly man, it was he—went to fetch Jennie, who had been well coached in her part. She had dressed herself in a most heterogeneous way, and walked with such a disdainful swagger in her absurd finery that Lorrimer could not help wondering, even at such a time, at the genius for comedy displayed by this girl.

Directly she saw the doctor she rushed forward.

"My husband! My long-lost husband! I've found you!"

Doctor Marsh, accustomed to all sorts of vagaries

as he was, started back, and then, recovering himself, he said:

"Yes, my dear, anything you like."

Then, ringing a bell, he sent for Bet, who came and took the new patient in charge. He followed her out of the room and said one word in the ear of Bet, and then returned to Lorrimer, received a month's money in advance and bowed him out. After Lorrimer had left, the wily doctor smiled sardonically:

"That was capitally done! Very well acted, indeed! But an old bird cannot be caught like that. I wonder whom that woman comes for! I must watch and find out. Perhaps the new patient."

Lorrimer had taken every precaution, even to disguising himself, for fear of accidents; but he had forgotten that, to an expert in lunacy, there were certain signs and tokens never absent, of which he and clever Jennie could know nothing.





CHAPTER XXIII.

Meanwhile, ignorant of the efforts of friends and enemies, Madge waited with patience for what might happen. Since she had seen Terry she no longer felt herself doomed to long suffering; she thought it probable that Jennie had informed Lorrimer of her dismissal, and that the latter coming to the hotel had come in contact with Terry. At all events, that visit meant something; it could not be entirely accidental.

Very cheerfully she bore the trials of the day, the scowls and hard words of Bet, and the wearisome persistence of "Miss Braddon" and one or two other poor souls, who were fascinated by the novelty of a new face and kept with her all the time.

"It would not take very long of this life to make me mad," thought Lady Madge, as she looked at the poor, unhappy faces around her.

At seven the patients all retired to their rooms, and Jane came to marshal them, seeing each one entered her room, and turning the key on them.

The patients, or at least those who were not violent, were allowed to mingle during the day, but at

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night the keepers made the relaxation of their own vigilance possible by keeping them separate. As they entered the corridor in which Madge's room was, she saw something that made her heart beat wildly. Bet was conducting a young woman to a room—a woman dressed in the most bizarre way, who walked with a self-complacent air, and yet in this woman she fancied—oh, could it be!—that she recognized Jennie.

So agitated was she by the possibility this called up that she did not notice what Jane and some others remarked, that there was a strong odor of gas in the house. Madge's room was the second on that corridor, and the first was that of "Miss Braddon;" the latter had just gone in and Madge was entering her own, when an explosion was heard, apparently in the room "Miss Braddon" had entered.

Jane ran back, flung open the door, and found the room a mass of flame.

The poor novelist rushed out. No one noticed her. So great was the consternation of Jane at the sight of the fire that she left everything and ran to give the alarm. While "Miss Braddon," the fire of madness in her eyes, rushed from room to room, shouting, screaming with a frightful joy in the ruin she was wreaking.

"Ha, ha! Didn't I tell you?" she cried, seeing Madge in the hall. "Didn't I tell you what a grand time we would have to-night? Ha, ha! No bolts and bars, no more gags, ha, ha! Come, you poor mad thing and see the fun!"

It had all taken place in an instant of time, but it dawned on Madge that the poor creature had set fire to the place, and then she perceived she had matches in her hands, and that every room in which she had been showed the gleam of fire. Acting on an impulse, she started to overtake her and try, if possible, to take the matches from her. This seemed a signal for a scene of wild confusion. The poor feather-heads, already excited by the poor woman's shouts of glee, seeing Madge start in chase of her, perhaps seeing, too, Jane was not near, all started screaming and laughing in wild career along the corridor, while the few who had been locked in their rooms before the occurrence, excited by the clamor, were pounding on their doors, shouting, cursing and screaming; the sounds emitted by the poor souls were like none uttered by sane people weird and horrible sounds, which echoed through the house, making it seem a veritable pandemonium.

Meanwhile the flames were spreading fast above. Jane had seen only one room on fire, which she had thought was due to an explosion of gas, as, indeed, it was. The poor demented woman, having been so long an inmate, seemingly so little inclined to mischief, had many privileges denied to others and was allowed gas. She had managed to turn it on early, closing her room up, and, on entering, had struck a light with surreptitiously obtained matches, hoarded for the purpose.

Madge, only dimly realizing all this, yet anxious to prevent further mischief, flew after the unfortunate "Miss Braddon," and the other unhappy creatures, completely unbalanced by the excitement, flew in her wake, and the pursuit only increased the wild jubilation of the maniac, for such she had now become.

As they reached the lower hall, Madge saw her run, laughing her mad, triumphant "Ha, ha!" into the cosy sanctum of the doctor, and, before she could prevent her, she had gathered the lace curtains up and flung them over the gas.

Madge screamed, and the lunatics at her back all screamed louder; and then, careless of her personal danger, she rushed in, and would have seized the matches from her hand, and, no doubt, got injured in the attempt, had not the poor woman suddenly thrown them all on the now flaming curtains, throwing up her arms exultantly as she did so.

"Didn't I tell you we'd have fun to-night! Ah, how good it is to see flames, the glorious flames!"

She began dancing and singing gleefully, her long, thin hair streaming down her back and her dark, little face gleaming wildly in the ruddy glare.

Suddenly a terrible thought occurred to Lady Madge:

Jennie! If she should be locked up in the upper part of the building! And those other poor helpless souls! Had anything been done for them?

Horror! To be locked up and perhaps burning to death!

She rushed up the stairs, which were now thick with smoke. She pressed her dress to her mouth and nostrils and rushed on; and then she heard Doctor Marsh, who had gone up the back way,

shouting to Bet to unlock every door, while over all the shouts and cries and hideous laughter below, rang out the clangorous peal of the alarm bell.

Lady Madge attempted to go toward the room that had been hers, for she thought she could hear knocks at the doors of patients who had not been allowed out during the day, but she was driven back by smoke and flames. The second corridor had taken fire, but, fortunately, not until after the other was enveloped in flames, and this was the corridor in which Madge had seen Jennie; and just as she was wondering whether she was locked in, she saw her, and Jennie saw her mistress. In the confusion no attention was paid to them, and Madge rushed to her.

"Oh, Jennie, Jennie, you here!"

"Yes, dear, dear lady, to save you. Mr. Lorrimer brought me, but I fear something terrible will now upset his plans; how shall we get out? Escape seems cut off!"

"Oh, no, Jennie, surely not! Look! We can get along this corridor!"

"No, my lady, the end is burning-"

"Come; come quickly; then we can get down

the way I came up!"

She half-dragged Jennie to the head of those stairs she had just ascended, but was met by some wretched beings who had tried that exit, but been driven back by the smoke and flames now pouring out of the doctor's room.

Ah, those terrible barred windows, they cut off every chance of the unhappy inmates for escape!

Doctor Marsh and a man were hard at work trying to wrench the bars out, but it was such slow work, they would all be burned alive before they could make an exit that way.

Then Doctor Marsh shouted desperately:

"To the roof! To the roof!"

Ah, yes, to the roof, but how to get there?

Madge and Jennie saw Bet and Jane, evidently thinking only of their own safety, throw their woolen skirts over their heads and rush madly through that horrible smoke.

If they could do it and live, so could others.

Lady Madge hastily told Jennie to do likewise, and then they made a dash forward, but the smoke choked and blinded them, and it seemed as if life must end in that wretched way. Yet they could hear the two keepers still in front; they had gone through and lived. Jennie clasped Madge's hand more firmly; she felt her weak frame succumbing. Ah, God, must they die, so young, so full of life?

Just as Madge stumbled and fell and could not rise, Jennie found they had reached the narrow staircase leading to the roof. She stooped to raise Madge, but, alas! Slight girl as she was, her dead weight was far too much for Jennie to lift. What was she to do? To stay there was certain death for both. If there was rescue for any one from the roof, she might bring aid to her mistress. She had no time to deliberate, or she was lost. She left Madge and rushed up the steps and there at the open scuttle got a draught of smoke-laden, sulphur-

ous air, yet so delightful by comparison was it, that she felt saved. But that was only for an instant. She stood the next on the roof, and looked about and found there seemed nothing to be done even there but to meet death in another way.





CHAPTER XXIV.

Lorrimer and Terry drove away from Doctor Marsh's asylum with heavy hearts. The sight of the place, so grim and comfortless, in which his adored Madge was confined, struck like ice on his heart; and Terry felt very sad to have seen the last of Jennie's pretty face for a few days. They drove slowly down the road toward Clondalkin, and then, when they came to a small public house, Terry, with many apologies for the suggestion, said he thought if Mr. "Lorrymore" would get out there and order something, it would be a good beginning, as they would have to make use of the place before long, perhaps. He had great hopes of making a comrade of the man employed by Doctor Marsh.

"And he comes every evening here, as soon as his master is at dinner, and stays till nine o'clock," said Terry.

"Let us go in by all means. You order anything you like for yourself and him, too, if he is there; and, as I have to dine somewhere, I may as well do so here."

"But the likes av you couldn't dine here, sir," said Terry, in horror at the thought.

"I fancy I could do a great deal worse, Terry; [172]

and dinner with me to-day is only a formality, and they can give me anything they have as an excuse for my being here."

He got down as he spoke and entered the small place. It was not so bad as might be supposed, for many tourists and sightseers, on their way to Celbridge Abbey, the home of Swift's "Vanessa," or attracted by the celebrated round-tower of Clondalkin itself, would stop for refreshment, and, therefore, to meet their needs, a better order of things prevailed than is usual at a roadside shebeen. And a by no means despicable dinner was promised, and Lorrimer sat down in the room and took up an old Dublin paper.

He had not read long before he was attracted by the distant sound of a bell—rung evidently at random, with none of the precision of a church bell and then he heard hurried steps and wondering voices.

"Something must be the matter!" he exclaimed, and he went out to the front, where landlord and men and women were all crowding and wondering, and all looking up the road which they had lately come down. Terry was there, too, and a man by him who started running. Terry came close to Lorrimer, and said:

"Mike, Doctor Marsh's man, says, sir, it is the alarm bell of the 'sylum, an' the whole av them is getting loose perhaps; anyway, we had best go there, I think, sir."

Lorrimer did not wait a moment for reply, but jumping on the box of the carriage, where Terry followed, he took the reins and was soon dashing back to the asylum, saying when they were on their way:

"It may be nothing that concerns us, but we must

neglect no possibility."

They soon overtook Mike, and Terry shouted to him, and Lorrimer slackened speed sufficiently to let him get on the carriage; and then off they went again, and soon they saw the cause of the alarm: Clouds of smoke were rising from the direction of the asylum, and the sky took on a lurid glow.

"A fire!" cried Lorrimer. "Heaven grant we be

in time to do something!"

He set his teeth hard when he remembered those grated windows, and that the woman he loved was behind them.

He urged the horses to their utmost speed, till the carriage swayed from side to side and threatened to capsize every minute; and within seven minutes of the first alarm, steaming and panting, the horses drew up at the entrance to the asylum.

Down sprang the three men and rushed into the courtyard, already crowded with people watching the torrents of smoke, the swift-devouring flames, and listening with blanched faces to the screams and cries of terror and despair from within.

They arrived just as Doctor Marsh had shouted: "To the roof!" And by the light of the flames behind the doctor was seen trying to wrench away the iron bars.

He had succeeded in getting one away. He knew he was hemmed in from below and that though with a ladder there might be safety for a few through the narrow aperture, it must be slow work, and long before all could get through the house would have become a wreck, and to stay to get another bar away would be to risk his own precious life. Ladders were being brought by neighbors, and the village hand-engine was now rattling up.

Lorrimer had seized Mike, who seemed fairly to

have lost his senses.

"Come, man, and show me where are ladders and rope!"

Mike led the way. Some one to guide him was all he wanted. They went to the doctor's stables, and Terry, who had followed, was soon aiding Lorrimer to carry a long ladder and a coil of rope.

The engine had begun work and was playing on

the roof, where several figures were seen.

Lorrimer saw it was hopeless to make any effort at the main portion of the house, through which the flames were rioting. No living thing could now be in it, but to the left of the angle windows, from which Doctor Marsh was now descending, was the wing; the flames had here made less progress, although volumes of smoke poured out from every aperture.

While Lorrimer placed the ladder, he called to Terry to run to the stables for a horse blanket, and then, with the rope on his arm, he went up as far as it would take him. When he reached the top rung, he called out for some one on the roof, and was answered by Bet, who had been lustily shouting for help.

"Catch this rope which I throw up, and make it fast to a chimney stack!"

As he spoke, he flung the rope, with a huge knot at the end, on to the roof, and found it was taken. In a few seconds Bet called out it was fast, and Lorrimer tried it by his weight, and then trusted himself to it, just as he heard Terry's voice at his heels:

"For the Lord's sake, sir, be careful wid your-self!"

The next moment he was going hand over hand up the rope to the roof.

Lorrimer was an experienced athlete, and the only danger to him lay in the possibility that the rope might be rotten or insecurely fastened. It was neither, and in a minute he stood on the roof, and Terry shouted to him:

"I'm comin', sir, aisy!"

On this roof were several women, such poor creatures as had been near Bet and Jane when they made their rush for the roof, and whom instinct told safety lay in following them. While looking through a sea of smoke and steam for Madge, his arm was seized.

"Oh, sir, save Lady Margaret!"

"Where, where, tell me?" he asked, breathlessly. Jennie ran to the scuttle, but was met by a powerful cloud of smoke, which sent her back, suffocating.

"Jennie, me darlint, yez can do nothin'!" cried Terry, who had followed. "Tell Mr. Lorrymore an' me where she is, an' we'll save her!"

Jennie saw she could do no good and yielded to common sense. She explained rapidly where Madge was lying, but with very little hope; it seemed impossible she could be living still.

Then, while they attempted her rescue, Jennie went to the other poor souls to help them in getting down from the roof. She expected to find Bet and Jane, the two powerful women, busy at that work, but instead they had taken advantage of the rope to escape danger themselves and left the poor demented wretches helpless.

"Come!" said Jennie to one of them. "Let me show you how to go down."

Yet she trembled in being in such a position alone with three mad women, who though dazed and puzzled, seemed to have no sense of their danger. They might take it into their heads to throw her off the roof.

Meanwhile, Lorrimer had thrown over his head the blanket Terry had brought and essayed to descend the flight of steps at the peril of his life. Twice had he been obliged to return to breathe, and he saw the flames approaching in waves of fire the spot where Madge must be lying, alive or dead; and if he could not reach it at once, all hope must be renounced. A moment's delay might be fatal, and yet his only hope would lose him several precious moments. He must risk it, if he was to succeed even in rescuing her dear body from the flames!

He left the scuttle and ran to where the engine was pouring streams of water on the building, and flinging the blanket where it would get wet, in a moment he threw it over him. With this he could hope to stand the smoke and heat, and, leaving only his eyes visible, he once more went to the stairs, and this time reached the bottom. There he found his feet came in contact with some prostrate object. Stooping, he found it a human being—it must be Madge. He seized her rapidly, for the heat was intolerable, and took her upstairs.

No sooner did he get her to the scuttle, where Terry stood to relieve him, than he would have fallen headlong back down into the fiercy chasm below but for Terry's retaining grasp.

Madge was allowed to drop on the roof while Terry dragged her deliverer out of his fearful danger. Once he was also out of the scuttle Terry called Jennie and resigning the unconscious Lorrimer to her care, said:

"I will take her ladyship—though whether she's a ladyship or only a body the Lord only knows—down from here, for I'm just thinking, from the look of things, it may just all fall in a hape at anny moment, an' the quicker we all get down, the safer."

He was busy, while he talked, arranging Madge's inanimate form, so that he might get her down safely.

It was no small undertaking to have her under one arm and cling himself to the rope with the other, but he called to some one below to come up and be at the top of the ladder to help, and a man, who he saw was Mike, came to his aid.

A momentary doubt assailed him as to whether he should resign her to any one connected with the place, but he had no choice; below all was turmoil and confusion.

The efforts of every one were more particularly directed to the main part of the house. There were more needing help there, and the fact of two men being already busy at that wing, which seemed less a center of danger, diverted attention from it.

"Take care av her, Mike," said Terry, as, clinging with one arm to the rope, he lowered Lady Madge into Mike's outstretched arms, and then returned to the roof.

His heart was full of vague fears, for knowing the terrific fire that was raging, he could not believe but it would soon burst out of the wing windows and cut off their escape, even if the whole did not collapse and bury them in its ruins.

And Lorrimer! Senseless! Inanimate! How could he be got down?

Terry lost not an instant, however, in taking him from Jennie, who had been doing her best for him, and held him where he could get some of the water that fell over the building on his face, while Jennie once more tried to make the poor women use the rope and escape.

"You will be buried alive or burned to death if you stay!"

But one of the women started up at the words and went to the rope. Jennie then, calling to some one below, showed the poor woman what to do, and she got safely so far as the ladder; then another followed her example; and the third, watching it all with apparent attention, suddenly laughed derisively and exclaiming: "Much ado about nothing!" she stood on the edge, and gathering her petticoats about her as if she were going to jump over a rope, she gave a laugh, and before Jennie's horrified cry could arrest her, she leaped off the roof.

It was no time to think of this horror, though Jennie never forgot it to her dying day. It seemed more frightful than anything that had happened, but she heard Terry call: "Jennie! Jennie!" and she went to him. Lorrimer was regaining his senses, and with help could be got to the rope; and, indeed, as he walked he got rapidly stronger and to understand the imminent danger; but, to Terry's despair, when he once more looked over, he found the flames encompassed the whole lower part of the house, and the ladder, their only hope, was burning.





CHAPTER XXV.

Mike took Madge down the ladder safely enough, and laid her on the ground out of the way of the crowd. Bet, who saw him come down with her, followed him, and said:

"Leave her to me, I'll bring her to, and you go and get some of them others."

Mike, who knew nothing of Madge more than any other patient, resigned her willingly. And Bet, looking at her, said to herself:

"Yes, this is the new un, and there must be a deal of money to be made by keeping her quiet, and I don't see why I shouldn't make it as well as Skinflint Marsh. Come along, my fine lady, if yer alive I'll make something of you, and perhaps I can make as much if ye're dead. No one need know it."

She lifted her as she spoke in her brawny arms, and carried her slight figure with ease. She kept well in the shadow, and in consequence of the glare of light everywhere, the shadow, where it was, was very dense. She made the circuit of the house, and went rapidly across a piece of ground at the back till she came to a shed. There she laid Madge.

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"There, no one will trouble this place in a hurry on a night like this. And now I 'll go back and see if I can see Patrick; he 'll be hanging round somewhere, where there is nothing to do and plenty to see."

She went back among the crowd, looking eagerly right and left, then she pushed her way through to the road, but the one she was looking for was not to be seen.

"He's been raking round, and found something, and gone off with it before he's forced to give it up. Well, he'll be back."

As she spoke to herself, she noticed a lady who was on the far side of the road, evidently watching the fire; but she seemed so out of keeping with the rough crowd that Bet found herself wondering where she came from, she seemed in the light of the flames to be so elegantly dressed. Suddenly, while she was indulging her curiosity about her, to her great surprise, the lady came near her and spoke:

- "Are you connected with the asylum in any way?"
 Bet eyed her curiously.
 - "What if I am?" she asked.
- "If you are, you may make some money if you can tell me something of a friend I had there."
 - "Well, I wants to make money."
 - "Then you were in the asylum?"
 - "I am an attendant there."
- "Ah, that's what I want! Now, can you walk out of this crowd with me? It may be worth your while."

"Come over here," said Bet, leading the way to a bank on which stood a tall hedge, where they might escape notice. "Now, tell me what you want, for I have summat to attend to."

"You know a young lady who was taken by a gentleman last night to the asylum?"

Bet looked at her dubiously.

You need not fear. I have no wish to rescue her from her seclusion. I only want to know about her. I'll give you a sovereign if you can tell me."

"Yes, I know. There was such a patient."

"Is she dead?" asked Laura—for it was she—anxiously.

"Do yer wish she was?" asked the woman.

"No," said Laura; "but I want to know where she is, and if I can find her without any one knowing it, I will give any one ten pounds."

"Look a yere—you may as well tell me what you want. I know where the gal is, but you couldn't get her from here now openly without bein' seen, and if you live anywheres near, you couldn't take her without it bein' known as you had one of old Marsh's lunatics with you, and as the lady's husband put her there, you'd have to give her up."

Laura thought she could manage better than that, but at the same time it might be better still if she could seem to have nothing to do with her, and this woman had evidently more interest in keeping faith with her than in deceiving her.

"Listen! I will trust you, and if you serve me well I will pay you well. That lady is necessary to me, but I do not care just now to have her free.

Only while she is in Doctor Marsh's care she is out of my power. He is employed by her husband. You must know some other such place where I could put her for a few months."

Bet was silent a moment.

"If you like, I'll take charge of her. I've got a place no one'll ever find her in, unless you like, and you can pay me as well as any one else."

"Well, that is not a bad idea. But where will

you keep her? Have you a house?"

"Yes; and I'll tell you, it's just the best place for the like of her as you wants to keep dark. My husband, Patrick O'Shane, makes a little potheen on the quiet, and we've a place all snug where the gauger never has been yet, and she can be took there an nobody never the wiser."

"Well, she might be taken there at first, that's true, and I have an idea. Can't you pretend to pity her, treat her very kindly and make believe to be hiding her from her husband and Doctor Marsh, who are advertising for her as an escaped lunatic? This will insure her staying quietly, and also make her grateful to you and listen to anything you may tell her later. I may want you to go to America with her, or somewhere. If you are faithful to me, I'll pay you well."

"Well, ma'am," said Bet, "so long as you pays me you'll have no cause to complain, though I don't

know much about soft-sawderin' people."

Laura smiled. She well understood that a policy of cuffs and blows would have suited her tool much better. But she had her own plan in her head, and, happily for her unfortunate victim, it was one to which good treatment was necessary.

Laura took out her purse and gave a five-pound note to the woman.

"This is an earnest of what I will do. I am staying near—at Clondalkin—and to-morrow morning come to me at the inn there, and I will make an arrangement with you, when I know you have succeeded in getting the lady away."

"What is her name?" asked Bet.

"Mrs. St. John."

"Well, I see Pat. I'll come to-morrow and let you know the result."

Bet hurried away in the direction of a little man whom Laura supposed to be her husband. She watched her eagerly talking to him, and the two went into the courtyard round the burning building, from which the people were clearing, for it was getting dangerous to stand so near. But Bet and Pat hastened to the back of the house and across the meadow to the shed where unhappy Madge had been left. She was still there and senseless, for, long as the scene has taken to relate, a very short time had elapsed since she had been rescued from the roof.

Laura watched, expecting to see them emerge with Madge; but they did not come, and then she began to have doubts as to her own wisdom. What did she know of that ill-favored woman after all, except that she *looked* capable of any crime?



CHAPTER XXVI.

Terry was filled with despair when he looked and saw that their hope of escape was cut off.

Lorrimer's life and his own they had chosen to risk, but he could not forget that Jennie was there solely at his instigation. Ah, he would have given his soul to ransom her life, if it might have been!

Instinctively he had snatched the rope up, before the flames from below should burn it, too; and yet, without the ladder, of what use was it? It was so short.

He went with it to the chimney-stack, round which it was fastened, and, to his joy, found it was wound three times round. He had forgotten that the rope had been only needed to reach the ladder, and Lorrimer had paid out all that he did not need for additional security above.

Even this would not give sufficient length to reach [186]

the ground, but the chimney was several feet from the edge of the roof. He rapidly unfastened it and then rushed across to the back of the house. There the flames were pouring out; but at the side there were no windows, and here the attempt might be made. To stay where they were was certain death. To trust to the rope, in the uncertainty how far it would reach, might be death, too, or broken limbs; but the risk must be taken.

He ran to Jennie and Lorrimer, the latter with his full senses about him now, but still weak.

"Jennie! Mr. Lorrimer!" he cried. "Come this minute an' let me help you! Jennie, me darlint, I'd have given me life for ye, an' I've brought ye into this danger. I don't know that I can save yer, but I'll try, an' thin Mr. Lorrimer'll go down, but you first, Jennie dear."

There were sobs in the poor fellow's voice as he spoke, but even as he spoke, he was hurrying them across, and he said:

"Jennie, I don't know how far this rope will go down, but I hope pretty near to the bottom, only as there is none to spare to reach the chimbley, I'll hold it at this end."

He and Lorrimer then explained in as few words as possible, how she must pass hand under hand to prevent skinning her palms, and that she must not allow the rope to slip through them, and then with a fervent: "God in heaven bless and save you!" from both, and with a wildly trembling heart and a feeling that she was going to her death, Jennie was led by Lorrimer to the parapet, while Terry

lay on his back, his feet braced against the parapet and the rope twisted round his hands.

"Jennie, darlint, when ye come to the end av the

rope, don't let go till I call: 'Drop!'"

Jennie heard, but made no answer. She had no hope herself of reaching the ground safely, yet she knew if she refused to venture the two men would not save themselves, and death at any rate up there was inevitable, and such a frightful death!

Lorrimer helped her over the edge and, lying flat on his stomach, he leaned over and held her hands on the rope till the first shock of finding herself in mid-air was over and her nerves were somewhat steadied; then he said: "Courage!" and could do no more, for Jennie clasped her rope convulsively, and almost feared to loose one hand to pass it down. Only the recollection that two other lives depended on her swiftness gave her courage, and then she began to descend slowly and steadily, hand under hand, and as she went down, Terry rose to a sitting posture, and then, Lorrimer bracing him, he leaned to the furthest point to give her every inch of rope, and then he called out:

"Drop when ye are at the end!" A few moments of agonized doubt, and Jennie left the rope and dropped. "Are yez hurt, Jennie?" called Terry. But there was no answer. "Jennie, Jennie, dear!" No answer.

And then Lorrimer said:

"Terry, you go now. There is no time to lose."

"Alas! Mr. Lorrimer, is it joking ye are, to talk about me going?"

"Come, Terry," he said sternly, "you jeopardize my life by any objections. I am going to see you down first, then I will fasten this rope somehow and go myself."

"But, Mister-"

"Come! There is not a moment, and Jennie may be lying dying at the bottom. Go at once!"

It was no use to combat further. He saw Lorrimer meant to be last on the roof, and then Terry. grumbling at leaving him, got over the parapet, Lorrimer bracing himself as Terry had done, and Terry began his descent. Terry was slightly built, but weakened as he was by what he had gone through, Lorrimer found it almost impossible to support his weight with his hands, and as he got lower and lower, it cut into the flesh, and he thought it must go, when it was suddenly released from below. Terry also had dropped.

And now Lorrimer looked about him. There was nowhere to fasten that rope but to the chimney, which would shorten it by at least twenty-five feet. No; that was, if not death, a crippled life. He would wait his fate where he was. He leaned over and listened for Terry. He called, but got no

answer.

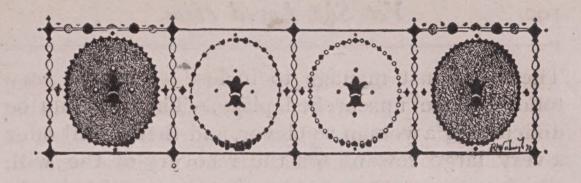
"They must both be stunned; they can hardly be dead," he thought. And then he again leaned, peering over. Nothing was to be seen, for while front and back of the house were in a lurid glow, this part was in densest shadow.

Suddenly there was a crash behind him; it was as if the very earth was shaken; a cloud of sparks and

dust and smoke. The roof had fallen in, leaving the sheer wall on which he was standing, and that rocked and swayed. It was scarcely possible it could stand many minutes, and his position was, indeed, hopeless. Not a ladder could be reared against that tottering wall. A rope would not help him. Death stared him in the face! And yet he had already escaped a terrible danger; had he fastened the rope to the chimney, he would only have had time to begin his descent and would have been hurled into space. That chimney was now part of the heap of ruins.

He clung to the fragment of parapet. It was just about a foot wide, and he had room to remain, but he dare not change his position. He had been sitting when the crash came; he remained so now. But for how long could he stay there, choking and blinded with the smoke and steam and dust, all blistered and suffering from the heat? And any attempt to rescue him must precipitate his destruction. And if he must die, and Madge should live what would become of her? Surely her enemies would prevail.





CHAPTER XXVII.

When St. John reached London, his first step was to dispose of the jewels he had stolen from Madge. This he did even before he went to his chambers, and then, his pockets well filled, and with the certainty of a hundred pounds more from Laura, he felt for the present he could defy fate. To do what he contemplated ready money would be needful.

When he reached his chambers he went to his escritoire and, opening one of the secret drawers, took from it a long, folded document, indorsed:

Last Will and Testament of

Henry Egerton Doyle—Lord Ferrars.

Poor Lady Madge would have recognized this document with horror.

"Now to hide this where it will be found, and therein Laura can help me, and, for vengeance's sake, she may be trusted. She has a general permission from Gerald to visit Melford, she tells me.

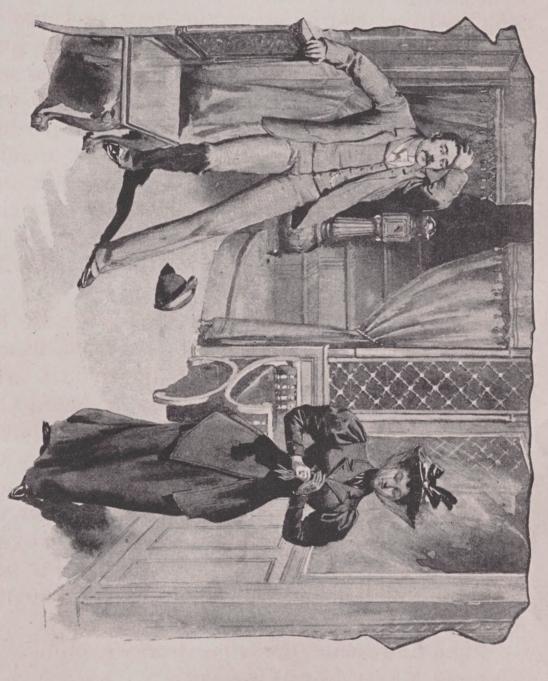
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Then she must manage to inclose it in some portfolio or some unsearched place. That will not be difficult for a woman so clever, and then I will offer a very large reward for the recovery of the will, which will set every one on the alert, or I may obtain a search-warrant and find it myself. The great thing must be that no one can connect me with placing it in the house. If I had only known what it contained! To think, after all, I should get hold of the wrong document, and be compelled to allow that other one to be proved. But it was the only way, and it cleared me from any awkward suspicion. Bah, it was a huge blunder, the whole business, but I am going to set it right. I don't work so hard to reap no benefit by it!"

He carefully placed the paper in his pocket and left his chambers. He called a hansom-cab and had himself driven to St. John's Wood. He determined this time to confide entirely in Laura. He had confirmation of the report of Gerald's intended marriage to show her, and that he believed would bind her to him. He never dreamed that Laura would attempt to force Gerald to marry her, and would use him as a means to that end. Given a bad woman and a bad man, the woman is far more subtle in villainy, and will generally out-maneuver the man.

When he reached the villa it was evening. He was told Miss Perceval was out.

"Out!" he echoed. He had not counted on her being out at that hour. "Perhaps she will not be long; I'll wait."



FOR ON THE UNGLOVED HAND GLEAMED AN EMERALD WEDDING-RING. - See Page 102.

"Oh, she will not be home to-night, sir," said the servant. "She is in the country somewhere, and said she might be gone a week."

"Oh, indeed!"

He left his card, and then was returning to his cab when, out of the ground, as it seemed to him, there rose before him the face of Cicely, clad in some long, dark garments, which he could not define in the obscurity, only a white face appeared to him, and a white hand clasping something to her, on which-flashed with a baleful light, even in the darkness, the fatal ring; and from the lips came hissing forth the words:

"Poisoner, vengeance is waiting!"

To his overwrought imagination the words sounded sepulchral. The reader will recognize in them, and in what seemed to the guilty man an apparition, only the very human agency of Mrs. Mortimer; but St. John, with a low cry of horror, fled along the path till he reached his cab. He sprang into it, bathed in sweat, and when he reached his chambers he feared to enter them. He was without a man, and they were lonely.

No, he would not go there. He hastily told the man to drive to the nearest hotel, and there he flattered himself he would recover from the shock—but in vain.

He plunged into a night's dissipation, drinking champagne and playing cards till the small hours. The night had to be faced at last, and then he saw, even when he closed his eyes, the livid face of Cicely! He had succeeded in persuading himself

that the apparition he had seen in his own hall was but the result of a disordered imagination, but he could do so no longer.

The next morning he rose from a sleepless night, pale, trembling and nervous. He hurried down to his breakfast, an unheard-of thing for him to do, but he longed to be with human faces around him.

"I must get a man to-day. I can't stand this," he muttered.

He opened the morning paper while preparing to eat his breakfast, and his pale face turned more ghastly, his hands shook so he could scarce read the print. The heading of an article had seemed to burn his brain:

"FIRE IN A LUNATIC ASYLUM NEAR DUBLIN. TERRIBLE LOSS OF LIFE!"

Then followed an account of the fire and a list of the inmates saved. Those of the lost were not given, but among the saved was not the name under which he had left Madge.

That Margaret should perish thus filled him with horror. Had she stood in his way he would have murdered her probably as coolly as he had done Cicely, but that was a different thing to her being burned alive, and then she was most vitally necessary to him. Everything he had done, and intended to do, fell to the ground if she should be actually dead.



CHAPTER XXVIII.

When Jennie, with one hurried prayer, let herself drop from the rope, she truly believed she was going to her death, or, at best, to have her limbs broken; but, instead of reaching the earth with a terrible crash, as she expected, she found, although the distance was some twenty feet, that she fell into close-growing shrubbery, which so broke her fall that, save for scratches and torn clothes, she found herself, when she managed to get out, as well as ever.

With a momentary prayer of heartfelt thanks to God, she awaited the descent of Terry, and, wishing she could tell him of her safety, she called up to him.

Her voice, however, was lost amid the uproar and the sound of the engines; but she had not long to wait before Terry, too, dropped into the friendly bushes.

"The Lord be praised!" he fervently ejaculated. "Iennie, me dear, where are you?"

"Here, Terry, safe and sound."

Terry was out of the bushes in a trice, and in his joy he flung his arm round Jennie's neck and kissed her; and Jennie, feeling it was no time for coquetry, perhaps, did not reprove him.

"And now the master! Ah, be me sowl!" he cried, as a terrific crash told them the roof had fallen, and a huge tongue of flame shot up to heaven from the billows of smoke.

A cry of horror escaped Jennie's lips, for they believed Lorrimer, the noble, self-sacrificing hero, was ingulfed in the ruins. Terry was speechless, and for some seconds stood gazing up and picturing to himself the chasm into which his poor master had fallen. And Jennie, with tears raining down her cheeks, gazed, too. So complete was the wreck that both felt there could be no hope of rescue; that he must be crushed and buried in the burning mass. Yet, when able to realize the truth, Terry said:

"I'll run round to the front and see if I can get any chance of finding his poor body, Jennie; you keep here—away from the crowd."

He waited for nothing, but dashed away, and Jennie stood hopelessly looking up at the parapet, over which, not a minute ago, they had expected to see him coming to safety.

The smoke was now somewhat less, the flames still brighter, and Jennie fancied, in the clearer atmosphere, she could see the outline of a figure. She ran a few yards farther back to get a better view. Thank God! Thank God! He was there still. She did not realize the danger he was still

in—that to himself his case was so hopeless that he had given himself up for lost, and was only awaiting death. She only knew he was there—alive still!

She rushed to the front of the house, where the crowd was a mass of excited people, surging back and forth, as one scene after another passed before their eyes.

Her cries of "Terry! Terry!" were unnoticed; her wild face and gestures found too many counterparts to attract much attention.

Oh, if she could but find Terry!

The flames had burned everything that could feed them; the walls stood gaunt and bare, smoldering beams and fragments of woodwork alone remaining, but the center was a mass of *débris*, sending up a column of lurid smoke glowing with sparks and embers. Could it be possible poor Terry (*dear* Terry, she said now in her heart) had rushed in there?

If so, he was lost!

And then, as her heart began to turn sick with fear, she saw him eagerly importuning for something, and she pushed her way to him.

"Terry, Terry, the master's there! Oh, save

Those standing round, hearing of some one to be saved, now listened eagerly to her.

"Come, b'ys!" shouted Terry.

And in a minute the crowd, which, in consequence of the side of the house being a dead wall without windows, had kept only to the front and back, now rushed to the lately deserted spot and soon saw Lorrimer.

A great shout went up and told him some effort to help him was to be made. Lorrimer smiled bitterly. There was only one way. Would they think of it? And if they did, would they be able to carry it out? He was so weak and hoarse from the smoke, his throat being almost raw from what he had inhaled and his position such that he could not hope to make any instructions intelligible below; but he saw them bringing ladders, many hands ready to help, and he could see them lashing two short ladders to make one long one.

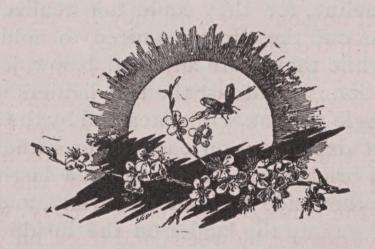
They could not hope a ladder would rest against that wall without falling into the general ruin. But no; they have seized the idea. They are lashing two more ladders, and then Terry and another man go round to the back of the house with it. He watched in the murky gloom for their appearance inside the wall. The heat and smoke made the effort very hazardous, but, fortunately, just under the wall it was comparatively clear; the mass of ruins was in the center. And soon Terry and another man came bringing the ladder between them; and stepping carefully, to avoid the masses of hot embers, they soon stood just under where he was and planted the ladder, holding it perpendicularly. Lorrimer now watched with eager interest. He had hitherto feared that their well-meant efforts would but hasten the catastrophe, but now he saw they realized the danger and might avoid it.

Terry stood looking up, and Lorrimer waved his

hand to him, which he answered with delight. Lorrimer now saw where he could help himself; he commanded both sides of the wall by his position. He motioned to Terry to approach his ladder, and he took the top rung in his hand; there at the other side the ladder was standing in the same way. Waiting for the signal, Lorrimer, holding as he was to Terry's ladder, could lean forward a little to throw his voice down, and made the men below understand they were to bring it under his hand, and then with the top of each ladder in each hand, he slowly brought them together and held them, though not without danger of being cast down by the efforts of the men below to place them at a right incline, for they could not realize how the vibration and the effort required to hold them in place, while they were adjusted below, jeopardized his position; but at last the two ladders met in an acute angle so that, while steadied by the wall, they were yet dependent on each other rather than on the frail brick-work. Terry shouted lustily to those on the other side to hold on firmly, and then he ran half-way up the ladder on the inside to steady it against Lorrimer's weight, as he should descend on the other.

And now, raising his stiffened, blistered body from his perilous position, he placed his feet on the ladder and began slowly to descend. As he got to the middle, one of the men below shouted to Terry, and now that all danger of Lorrimer's weight overbalancing the inside ladder was at an end, Terry, too, began to descend. There was no sound ut-

tered now till Lorrimer stood on the ground safe, and then a great cheer went up. And Lorrimer, strong man as he was, staggered and fell, fainting, into the arms of those who had helped to rescue him.





CHAPTER XXIX.

When Bet and Patrick lifted the slight form of Lady Madge she slightly stirred; she was evidently recovering from the stupor into which the smoke and terror had cast her.

"Take off yer coat, Pat, and kiver her face, then put yer cap on her head, and we'll carry her betune us, and if any one sees us, they'll just think it's a a man with too much whisky."

But it was not likely any one would see them, for the way was dark, and they struck across the fields till they reached the road. After walking some distance, the round tower of Clondalkin came in view. They then turned sharply off the road, and were on the brink of an ancient quarry, which was partly overgrown by weeds and trees, only its form and the white face of the stone, as it broke out here and there from the green, indicated what it once had been.

Bet stooped and lifted aside a huge tangle of weeds and vines, and with her foot pushed what seemed a great block of stone; it turned slowly round on a pivot, and revealed a narrow entrance.

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Bet entered first, then Lady Madge was passed through the aperture, and Pat followed. As soon as he was within the narrow passage he pulled the tangle Bet had displaced back over the mouth of the cavern and then fitted the stone, which, heavy as it was, had been so nicely adjusted that it revolved with comparative ease back into its place.

He struck a match, and taking a long resin torch from a cleft in the wall, they went forward till they came to a great vaulted room, in which a turf fire was casting its ruddy glow all round and making the air thick with its pungent smoke. Bet now uncovered Madge's head and found her great eyes were open; she was no longer swooning, but evidently so confused that she did not know where she was.

"Now, Pat," said Bet, in low tones, "this girl is to be cosseted and taken care of and made to believe we are her best friends and are hiding her from danger. What the danger is we're not to know, madam thinks; but she'll come none o' that onto me! I'll find out, and then if she turns against us, I'll turn on her; but our game is soft-sawder."

"I'm glad of that," said the little man, who was evidently in awe of his better and larger half. "I'm none for ill-using young ladies."

"You're for nothin' but drinkin' and smoking," said Bet, contemptuously. "Hand me the crayther."

The "crayther" was whisky in a black jug,

which she held to Madge's lips and poured liberally down her throat.

"There, that 'll bring yer to it, if anything will, and put some color into yer white face! Pshaw! Such a fuss over a puling thing like that!"

Bet had a profound contempt for all delicate or

small people.

Half-choked with the distasteful liquor, Madge was yet benefited by the roughly administered dose. She began to look around, to remember, and, seeing this, Bet came to her and adopted the wheed-ling tone of one, ferocious by nature, assuming kindness.

"My dearie, ye 're safe now, and we 'll take care of yer. Yer needn't fret."

Madge looked at her and recognized the brutal woman of the asylum, and shuddered. Had she fallen utterly in her power?

"Tell me about the others! Jennie! Where is she?"

she?"

"Jennie?" said Bet, wondering. "Who is she? The lady as is going to take care of you and keep yer from them as are yer enemies?"

"Lady?" echoed Madge. Then remembering women of Bet's class call all women ladies, she said:

"Yes. What became ot her?"

"She's all right. But don't ask no questions; I can't a-bear people as ask questions. You won't go back to no such place as old Marsh's, and you are going to be hidden here for a while."

Madge's conclusion was that Bet had been bribed, through Jennie, by Lorrimer. It was sweet to think she was protected by him, and she asked no more questions. The reaction from the terrible excitement she had undergone and the reek of the turf made her drowsy. Bet had laid her on a bed of dried moss when she brought her in, and she fell asleep almost directly.

When she awoke, she found herself alone. The fire had been newly made up, a bowl of porridge and a pitcher of milk were placed on an inverted barrel, which did duty for a table near her. She understood that the milk was for her, and she drank of it heartily and then stood up. She felt sick and giddy, and was glad to sink once more on the pallet of moss; but, although her condition was wretched, she believed herself under the protection of Lorrimer and rejoiced. Perhaps a few hours would release her from this place. It was lighted only by the glow of the fire. She looked round and saw the glittering walls, the stalactite roof, which gleamed, where the smoke had not dimmed it, like diamonds, and she knew she was in a cavern.

Bet had gone to the scene of the fire. Her place was a lucrative one, for not every robust woman would have suited Doctor Marsh, and she was anxious not to lose her place in his favor. He would lose no time, she knew, in opening his asylum again, and would want her even now to take charge of the poor creatures rescued, but she would plead burned hands, in order to be free a few days. Jane could manage, so she had bound up both her hands, and went to report herself.

There she heard of the gentleman about whom

there seemed a mystery, who had risked and nearly lost his life in attempting to rescue a patient, and who now lay on a bed of fever, and of his servant, who was making constant inquiries for her, Bet, and for one of the patients whom Doctor Marsh supposed to be among those who had lost their lives but whom this man and a woman insisted had been saved and given to Mike, who in turn declared he had given her into the charge of Bet. Doctor Marsh had got the use of an empty house not far from the scene of the fire, and had there taken his unfortunate patients, three of whom, besides Jennie and Lady Madge, were missing and given up for lost.

Doctor Marsh had his own opinion about Jennie's mission, and the gossip that was now rife about Lorrimer's rescue of one patient and her disappearance, but he wanted as little stir as possible. He affected, therefore, to pay no attention, and to believe five souls had perished. Among those known to have done so was the unfortunate author of the disaster, "Miss Braddon." She had been seen dancing in mad glee to her death.

It was Jane who poured forth all the news to Bet and, eying the latter curiously, said:

"What did you do with her when Mike gave her till yez?"

"What did I do? Put her on the ground, to be sure!" said Bet, roughly. "It was no time to be paying attentions to any one."

"What's come of her, then?" asked Jane.

"How should I know? Old Marsh could tell better than us perhaps. She was in some one's way, that's sure. Perhaps she was chucked back into the house to die comfortably and cost nothin' to bury her," said the woman with a grin.

"Well, there's been foul play somewhere," said

Jane.

"If there has, depend on it, Marsh knows all about it, and won't want no stir made."

This seemed to strike Jane. He certainly did not seem to want a stir made. Bet might be right. She did not see what interest Bet could have in the matter—unless, indeed, she had been hired by Marsh to do the deed she spoke of. Jane knew her to be capable of any enormity. She thought it might be wiser to hold her tongue.

When she saw the doctor and told him that she was burned, he questioned her quietly about the missing lady who had been given into her charge. She then told him the same thing as she had told others, adding that, in consequence of her burned hands, she had been obliged to lay her down on the grass at the side of the house and to go away. When she came back she found she was not there, and thought she had been taken care of with the other rescued people.

Doctor Marsh was silent. He had no doubt of Bet, but he believed Madge had been carried away by friend or foe.

When she had gained all the news she could and obtained leave of absence, she went back to the cavern to see after her charge, and also to get ready for her expedition to Laura, who had given her name as Miss Graham.



CHAPTER XXX.

A week passed, and Lorrimer still lay on his bed of sickness at the inn at Clondalkin, to which, as soon as possible, he had been taken. He refused to be taken back to Dublin, and here, where he could hear everything that went on about Doctor Marsh and his patients, he insisted on remaining. His anxiety on Madge's account drove the doctor who attended him to despair, and he predicted he would have a relapse, and he forbade Terry to bring him any news from outside at all; but this caused the patient such irritation that he was obliged to remove the interdict. At last he said to the sick man:

"As I understand, you are in great distress about a lady who is in danger, to whom your illness is a misfortune. Do you not think it is well to give yourself every chance of speedy recovery in order to attend to your affairs? You will be ill for months if you go on in this way."

Then Lorrimer exercised self-control, and determined, for Madge's sake, to fight against himself and to do nothing that could retard his recovery.

But Madge—where could she be? That she was alive he had no doubt. She must still be in Doctor
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Marsh's hands. No one else had interest in spiriting her away. But in vain Terry watched and inquired; there was nothing to be heard of her.

The house Doctor Marsh had pro tem. was not favorable to secrecy—a commonplace new villa—and there was nothing heard of a patient resembling Madge; and Doctor Marsh himself was ostensibly seeking her. How he wearied to be up and working for her! He could not believe but he would find her if he were able to seek her himself.

Had he been up, perhaps he would have altered his mind about her having no other enemy near. For the first three days he was at the inn, a lady, whom he would have recognized, though Terry did not, was also a guest there. Unluckily, Jennie had returned to Dublin, to the lodging Terry had found for her before they started on their ill-starred enterprise, or Laura would have had a watchful and distrustful eye ever upon her. As it was, after the first morning she had told Bet she would meet her in a spot the latter indicated, so as to avoid any gossip there might be; and then, after satisfying herself that Madge was in safe-keeping, and she could lay her hand on her at any moment, she left Clondalkin and returned to London.

Poor Lady Margaret, gently nurtured child of wealth as she was, was lying in that comfortless cavern, in which daylight never penetrated, and because she believed it safe she never thought to murmur. If she could only remain hidden from her terrible husband—if husband he was! Ah, if it could ever be that he was not her husband—that

the thought which had once covered her with humiliation and shame could now prove true!

Bet had made some arrangement for her comfort, not knowing how angry Miss Graham might be if she should find she had been ill-treated: therefore an inner chamber, of which there were three in the cavern, had been provided with washing utensils and a bed of fresh moss; and as a turffire burned on the hearth constantly, it was warm. And Madge, finding that Bet really was doing her best to make her comfortable, had asked if she could not get some books for her of any kind and writing materials, and she had brought her several and a supply of stationery, and Madge was content. She was not forced to be in the company of Patrick and his wife, and kept to her own chamber. And thus, her heart contented in the belief that her true friend Lorrimer had saved her, and was biding his timd for some good purpose, the days passed not too miserably.

* * * * * * *

When Laura reached her home, she found a letter from Gerald, telling her he was coming to London in a few days. He had something which was a painful duty to tell her, and Laura set her teeth hard as she read; she guessed what it was he was preparing her for, and she meant to be prepared for him.

Mrs. Mortimer came to her almost directly she arrived, and in excited tones told her of St. John's visit, and then said:

"But I have longed for you to come. I want you

to advise me; I have made a great discovery, a glorious one."

Laura looked at her inquiringly.

Look!" she exclaimed, exhibiting a paper.

Laura took it, and saw it was a certificate of marriage between "Cicely Warren, spinster, and Lawrence St. John, bachelor." Laura's eyes glowed with triumph. She had anticipated a very hard battle to fight with Lawrence, should she even get Madge out of the way, and succeed in suppressing the will as the condition on which Gerald was to be made to marry her, but Lawrence would be a formidable antagonist, and might, at the last moment, upset all her plans, if there was a hope of him getting any part or power over Madge's money; but with this paper she need have no fear. First she would, when the time came, prove to him that he was never legally married to Lady Margaret, and had no claim on her, and then show him he was liable to arrest as a bigamist at any time she might choose to betray him. The time for this would come when Gerald was ready to marry her to save his fortune. Till then she must act as if she worked with Lawrence. Now, too, her doubts about Madge were solved. She had intended sending her abroad secretly and by force, with Bet; now she would not be forced to a plan so full of difficulty and danger. St. John had no real claim on her, but while Madge believed he had, she could easily persuade her to do her bidding. She would go back to Ireland as soon as she found out what St. John had wanted to see her for.

All this went like a flash through her brain, while poor single-souled Mrs. Mortimer believed she was only thinking of Cicely wrongs, so tenderly did she condole with her and seem to share her triumph in the knowledge that her sister was an honest woman.

"Keep that, dear Mrs. Mortimer, and guard it as the most precious thing on earth. I will tell you when to use it with most terrible effect. While St. John has no trace of his wife, it will not harm him half so much as when he has found her, as he certainly will, and is just entering on the enjoyment of the fruits of his crime."

She sat down and wrote a line to St. John, telling him she had heard of his call on her return to town and would be glad to see him.

Almost directly he answered her note in person.

He was looking so unlike himself that she asked him whether he had been ill.

- "I have been terribly worried. Did you see an account of the burning of a private madhouse near Dublin?"
 - "Yes, of course. A horrible affair!"
- "Well, I had great fears that Madge had perished, and although I had put her there for safekeeping, it shocked me that she should die so frightful a death."
- "Well?" asked Laura, eagerly, not even pretending to be shocked at his confession of what he had done with Madge, but very anxious to know what he had learned.
 - "I say I had great fear, but I have positive in-

formation that she did not perish, that she was rescued from the fire and has disappeared since. And as Lorrimer is insanely in love with her and has been working against me all along, of course, I suspect he has her concealed. I know he was on the spot."

Laura knew this, too, but she was delighted his

suspicions took this turn.

"Of course, my finding her is only a matter of time. Laura, can I trust you absolutely?"

"Is it not my interest to serve you to be revenged on Gerald?"

"Yes, I suppose so. Now it is your interest that the will should be found. I have it, as, perhaps, you have guessed; but you alone, who are absolutely without interest in it, can help me to have it found. You have always access to Melford; you must know of some old portfolio or book in which you can place it—some place where it may readily have escaped search as unlikely to be made the depository of an important document, yet where it must seem probable he might have left it."

"I know a dozen such places," said Laura, promptly. "Ah, Gerald is coming to England this week to break to me the news of his intended marriage, and I shall rejoice in the knowledge that his downfall is coming." She spoke with irrepressible triumph, which, he believed, came solely from her delight at her power to avenge herself, little dreaming that when the will was in her hands she would have both himself and Gerald in her power.

"When will you go?"

Laura thought rapidly. Gerald might not be in London for some days. She wanted everything ready by the time he came. To do that she must play at rescuing Madge, get her entirely in her power, have her at hand for Gerald to see, if he doubted her power; and to do this she must go to Dublin again. She had come back with the idea that a struggle of wit would be necessary in order to get possession of the will. She had not supposed, for a moment, that it would be actually deposited in her hands. She might have been an angel from heaven, and he would not have trusted her for a good motive; but he believed so entirely in the bad one alleged by her that he felt no fear.

"I will go when you like—to-morrow, if you wish it."

"I wish you would. I hardly have any plan at present. Of course, Madge has not been allowed to remain in Ireland. If Lorrimer rescued her, he would know Marsh could claim the care of her at any moment as a lunatic, and I have sent instructions to a detective to watch his movements. My own will be guided by them. My information is that he is ill and still on the spot; but he has no doubt placed her out of reach. He has engaged my man, Terry, who is as smart as possible in some things and has a sort of romantic devotion to Madge. But directly I hear of him making a move I shall track him from place to place till I find Madge. He will hover round her as a moth round a candle."

Laura applauded his design, which fell in so well

with her own plans, and then she told him she would go to-morrow to Melford, that she would stay a day or two, perhaps more, and would not write to him, so that no trace of her being in communication with him might arise.

He readily agreed to the precaution, little thinking it was assumed to cover the fact that she would be in Ireland instead of at Melford, and therefore could not write from Melford, and feared he might ask her to do so.

"Very well; that is decided," he said, putting his hand in his bosom and taking from it the stolen will. His hand trembled as he handed it to her, and Laura wondered what could have produced such a change in the cool-nerved, callous villain. She little knew the horrors of guilty terror he endured—how not an hour had passed for several days when he had not been haunted by a fear of being alone for the night. He had seen nothing since his last visit to that house, but he believed at any moment his dead wife might appear before him. In vain he had flown to the brandy bottle to give him "tone," to drown thought. Nothing succeeded in banishing that white face from his mental vision.

He left Laura, glad that he had so easily arranged for the finding of the will without being by any possibility connected with placing it where it was. He had expected Laura would object to putting herself in an equivocal position by going to Melford, as she probably would have done if he had intended to go there.



CHAPTER XXXI.

Although Madge's days passed peacefully and without particular hardships, they were very weary. She found herself vainly longing for Lorrimer to come, and then she would blush painfully. Could it be that she was thinking too much of this man, who loved her so well and whose love she believed encompassed her? She, for whom love ought ever to be a forbidden blessing, she had sacrificed the right to enjoy.

One day the monotony of her life was broken (she had not been more than nine days in the cave, but it seemed a year) by Bet telling her the lady who was her friend and who had paid to have her cared for was coming to see her and that she would take her away that evening.

"Jennie!" exclaimed Madge, joyfully. And her mind became full of pleasant agitation. How slowly the hours went! But at last the evening came. Bet returned, for she had long since gone back to her work; but she had managed to get leave to be away. There was now less need of her, for some of

Doctor Marsh's patients, having good and loving

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friends, had removed them to another asylum; for, since the fire, many stories had got abroad about the cruelty and dirt of his. And so Bet could have more liberty.

This night Madge listened for her eagerly, and heard that she had not returned alone. A second step, a cautious voice reverberated through the vaulted cavern.

Madge rushed into the outer room, and started back at seeing a figure not all like Jennie's—a lady, closely veiled and plainly dressed, yet whose exquisitely gloved hand revealed that she belonged to a different rank from Jennie.

Laura threw up her thick veil, and Lady Madge started back and trembled violently when she recognized her ex-companion.

"Madge, darling Madge!" cried Laura. "Are you not glad to see me?"

"I am glad to see any one—I am so lonely," said Madge. But the tears filled her eyes. She mistrusted Laura now, though she knew nothing against her except her connivance at her own ill-fated marriage. Suspicious circumstances there were many, but Lorrimer had felt bound to tell her that, after the reading of the will, Laura's motives were not to be suspected.

"Madge, you mistrust me. Well you may. I can never forgive myself for my wretched weakness in listening to your girlish romance, and I have been seeking ever since to atone and to frustrate your husband's plans. I found out where you were, and when the fire occurred I bribed that woman to

bring you here, to care for you and keep you concealed. Have I done nothing to prove my friendship, my repentance?"

If this was true, and it must be, had she not indeed proved her affection? Madge felt a pang at her heart when she learned that Lorrimer, to whose love and care she believed herself indebted, had nothing to do with her deliverance, but she smothered it, and held out her hand to the treacherous woman who played her part so well.

"Yes, Laura, you have indeed earned my gratitude. But for you, I should be still in my husband's power."

And over Madge, from whose trusting mind the aoubts of her friend's good faith vanish as a mist from a landscape, came all the old tenderness she had had for Laura. She was ready to believe that all her apparent inconsistencies were due to lack of judgment rather than treachery. Her lonely heart yearned for love and sympathy, and when Laura folded her in her arms, for the moment all the intervening wretchedness was forgotten, and only the memory of her happy girlhood remained. Such blissful oblivion, however, could not be for long. One glance at surroundings brought the miserable present back to her. And yet with one faithful woman-friend, the lonely girl felt the future was less drear.

"My darling, you will be glad to get away from this. Come quickly! I am so sorry I had to keep you here so long, but there was no help for it. Doctor Marsh and your husband were on the alert, and are still, indeed, and I have to take you out of this secretly."

Madge needed no second bidding; she was ready as she stood, but Laura had a large, gray cloak and a soft silk hood with her, and enveloped her in it, and then, with a few parting words to Bet, she left the cave, as she supposed, to find comfort and safety with her old friend, little knowing the treachery that beset her.

"You will have to walk, dear Lady Margaret," said Laura, "for a short distance. Bet is so tenacious of their secret that she would not hear of my bringing the hack nearer than the main road."

Madge laughed, so happy was she to be once more in the open air, at the idea of having to walk.

"I could walk for miles," she said. "Oh, to be once more free and with you! Everything seems like a hideous dream!"

"Well, dear, we will try to think it is so."

She got into the waiting carriage and then drove toward the city, poor Madge little supposing she was so hopefully leaving her best and truest friends in Clondalkin, but so it was.

Lorrimer was just getting up from his illness and beginning to gain strength and go out, and he followed the doctor's orders with painful eagerness, so anxious was he to get strong and seek for Madge. And the very evening that saw her carried away was that of the day on which he, for the first time, had been able to take a short walk, and the next he intended to go to Doctor Marsh in his own person and offer so stupendous a bribe for information that

a man of that worthy's principles, who was now undoubtedly in difficulty, would be unable to resist.

For Lorrimer knew whatever St. John may have undertaken to do in the future, his actual performance must have been limited, for ready money was a commodity of which he had always a limited supply. It was with some confidence then and no scruples whatsoever that Lorrimer, next morning, went to see Doctor Marsh. But, notwithstanding that gentleman's intense desire to accept the magnificent inducement held out to him, he really had nothing to tell, and convinced Lorrimer of that fact.

Bet had let him in the house, and she had applied her ear to the keyhole so successfully that she knew the offer that had been made, and the light of greed shone in her fierce, hard eyes as she let the visitor out of the house. She knew well where he was staying, for a man of that stamp could not be long in the village of Clondaning without exciting remark, and Doctor Marsh, indeed, had had him watched as being connected with Madge's disappearance.

When he reached the inn, he said to Terry:

"It is no use staying here, Terry; Lady Margaret cannot be concealed here; all my preconceived ideas are upset, and I must go on a new tack. Pack up, and we will start for Dublin. I made sure that scoundrelly doctor knew all about her and would tell if he was paid enough. I am satisfied he knows nothing."

Terry was in high spirits at getting once more to

Dublin and Jennie. He had his own conviction that Madge had been taken far away from that neighborhood by St. John, and that she was to be sought in England rather than Ireland.

While the preparations for departure were being made, Lorrimer was told that a woman wished to speak to him. His thoughts at once flew to her who was never long absent from them, and he ordered her to be shown in. Needless to tell the reader, it was Bet come to increase her harvest.

"You're the gent as come to Doctor Marsh this morning about a patient?"

"I am. Can you tell me anything about that patient?" said Lorrimer, eagerly.

"Maybe I can. What 'll you give me?"

"Anything! Anything within reason."

Bet's eyes sparkled with cupidity.

"How much is anything?" she asked.

"I will give you twenty pounds if you can set me on the track of finding her—a hundred if you can tell me where she actually is!"

Bet groaned in spirit. How she wished she had sent Patrick after Laura, never to leave her till he had seen her destination! But how could she expect such a shower of gold would rain down on her as this?

"Give us the twenty," she said. "I'll tell you all I know."

Lorrimer counted out ten, and then said:

"The other ten are yours when I hear your story."

Bet then related what she chose of Madge's his-

tory since the fire, not betraying the cavern, however, but alleging her to have been concealed in a country house some miles from there, and that a lady had been the instrument of her departure.

"Describe that lady," said Lorrimer briefly.

And Bet gave a description that seemed to fit no one of whom he could think, for Bet's powers in this way were limited, and she saw Laura with different eyes from a cultivated observer. He had but to conclude then that the lady was some one hired by St. John.

"Where did they go?" he asked.

"To Dublin; but I heard the lady say they were to go to London at once."

"They went in a hack, you say?"

"Yes."

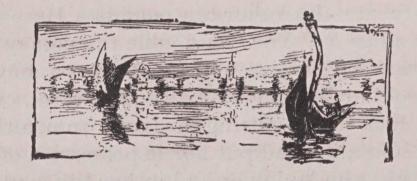
"There are the other ten pounds. Here is my London address. You can double the money at any time by sending me any information you may get."

Bet took up the money without a word, cursing her bad luck in not getting the larger sum, although Laura's liberality had put her in possession of more money than she had ever had in her life, and these twenty pounds would have seemed enormous wealth if she had not heard of the hundred she might have had.

Lorrimer and Terry started at once for Dublin, and his first care was to inquire at all the hack-stands for one which had taken one lady from Dublin to Clondalkin and brought two back. He was not long in discovering the man, and learned that after taking the ladies to the Shelbourne Hotel he

had then driven them to the station to take the train for London.

Lorrimer knew now his business in Ireland was over and that to find Lady Margaret he must go to London. He bade Terry go to Jennie and ask her what she wished to do—to remain and seek service in that city or return to Melford.





CHAPTER XXXII.

As the hack-driver had told Lorrimer, he had taken the ladies to the hotel where Lady Madge had dressed herself in Laura's clothes and then they had started for England. When they reached London, Madge, closely vailed, was taken by Laura to St. John's Wood, and it was with a feeling of utter thankfulness that the unhappy girl once more found herself in a house where she was free and at home. It was the first glimpse of physical comfort she had known since she left home, and it was grateful to her; it seemed like returning to her old life once more.

"You will stay here, my sweet, quite safe, so long as you are guided by me. I shall watch over you, warn you of any danger and take you out of it if necessary."

"But what am I to do to live, dear Laura? I

cannot depend on you."

"Nor shall you. Your father's will left you provided with enough to live on."

"Yes; but I never dare claim it. It would reveal

my whereabouts to Lawrence."

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"I don't think you could safely do it in this country, but there are other lands to which you and I could go, and where you would be protected from him."

"I don't care where I go provided I can be free from him. One place is as good as another, if only I need not fear his compelling me to live with him. I should die! I would kill myself rather!"

"You shall not. Trust yourself to me, my poor little woman!"

Thus did the crafty Laura prepare the way for the plan she meant to carry out, directly she had made her presence serve her purpose with Gerald.

Laura congratulated herself on her own subtlety. Lady Madge, in her fear of the husband who had no real claim to the power of one, would blindly follow her directions and play into her hands by carefully keeping out of his reach, and the reach of any one who could set her right. Once safe in America, Gerald—by that time her own husband—would pay her the income left in the first will, and St. John would be prevented from interfering by the power she would have in her hands once she

obtained the certificate of his first marriage from

Mrs. Mortimer, for his arrest for bigamy would

follow any effort on his part to frustrate her plans.

Now she had but to await Gerald's coming.

She was anxious to prevent any chance of St. John coming to the house while Madge was there, and she therefore wrote him a note, telling him she had returned from Melford and appointing a meeting in town.

She kept the appointment, assured him the will was placed in an old portfolio the late earl frequently used, but which had not been searched in consequence of its being so improbable a receptacle for such an important paper.

Perhaps St. John's mental state was less vigorous than formerly. Whatever the reason, he accepted Laura's version, which she had herself looked on as open to much question, and was prepared to asseverate in the most solemn manner to reassure him with very little question at all, and seemed infinitely relieved that the thing was done.

"Have you heard anything of Lady Margaret?" she asked.

"No, not a thing. The truth is, till this business was finished I was in no hurry. Now I will set a detective to work to watch Lorrimer—he knows her whereabouts, I feel sure—and she will be in my hands before long."

Laura smiled encouragingly.

"All will soon be arranged, no doubt, for Gerald is coming, and then, as soon as you have found Madge, let me know by letter. Do not come, for your own safety's sake."

St. John would promise anything for his own sake, and such promises he was likely to keep.

Laura had not long to wait for Gerald. That very evening, when she reached home, on opening her evening paper, she saw notice of Lord Ferrars's arrival at Claridge's Hotel and, a little lower, notice of Mrs. and Miss Jerningham's arrival in town,

She bit her lip till the blood came, then laughed

at herself for her vexation at seeing these two names in juxtaposition.

"What a fool I am, when my time is coming, and I can triumph over them all."

The next day brought a message from Gerald, asking her when she could see him.

She replied that she would remain home all that day, and to come when he pleased.

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Gerald, Lord Ferrars, was one of the most miserable men in London on the day when he had to break the truth to Laura Perceval. That he was behaving badly, he could not deny, but, strange to say, the knowledge of what he owed to her only made him care the less for her; it seemed impossible that he could marry a woman so very astute. And then-and that may have had much to do with his scruples—he really and truly loved Clara Jerningham-loved, for the first time in his life, a woman better than himself, a good, pure, innocent girl. How he was coming out of the interview with Laura he could not tell; like a whipped dog, he thought, most likely; but at any rate, every day made his conduct worse, and he had screwed his courage up to the point, and he would go.

He gave himself no time for reflection when he got Laura's message, but went at once to her. He had drawn up a document offering to allow her a thousand pounds a year as compensation for his broken faith. This he had in his pocket, and tried to believe that she ought even to be grateful to him for it.

But this was a useless attempt at self-deception, as he knew when his cab drew up at Laura's door, and the next moment, with a glad face and her eyes just tenderly suffused with tears, she rushed forward to meet him.

"Oh, Gerald, dear, dear Gerald, how good it is to see you after all these long weeks, and such short letters! But now you are here, you are not going again!" she said, as she dragged him into the room.

"Well, dear Laura, I'm afraid I must," he said, with a face he meant to be a mixture of tenderness and regret, as a preparation for the news she must hear.

"No, dearest, you are never going to be so cruel to me. If you go again from London, you will, at least, take me with you. Let us get married at a register office, and quite privately, and then we can make it known when we like, only, my dear love, I cannot, cannot live without you!" She laid her clasped hands on his shoulder and looked into his face, her own warm and beaming with the glow of passionate love; and his was uneasy, his eyes refusing to meet hers, his pale face and his lips twitching nervously. Gerald Ferrars would rather at that moment have been in the thick of a battle than with Laura in safety there.

"Laura," he said in agitated tones, "I wrote you I had something I must tell you."

"Yes, yes, I know you did; but surely nothing that you need speak of in this delightful moment of our reunion," she said, desperately fighting off the evil hour.

"Yes, Laura, I have been weak and cowardly hitherto. When you have heard what I have to say, you will be sorry, perhaps, that you have received me so warmly. You will hate me; but I must tell you the whole truth."

"Well, what is it?" she said, drawing back from him, with white lips that worked tremulously. Well she knew this was her last good hour; that after this she must show herself to this man as she was, a fearful woman, with a desperately wicked heart, and she clung to this last moment of her better nature before casting off the mask.

"Laura, I am a villain; but I have this excuse, and I will plead my excuse before I tell you of my fault, for after that is confessed you may not let me speak to you. When we first loved each other, marriage, as you confessed, was an impossibility."

"Yes, it was, but by my means it has become quite possible and natural," she said coldly.

"Yes, but, Laura, before that happened I had engaged myself—"

"To a girl as poor as I," she interrupted quickly, turning round on him like a flash. "I have heard something of this. You cannot mean—oh, imposble!—you cannot mean that you have come to me to make that a pretext for breaking your troth to me! You cannot be such a villain as that!" He was silent for a moment, and she gave him no time to frame an answer. "Something of this I heard, and laughed at it. Why, that girl was as impossible as I was myself. Do you mean to come here and tell me that you are going to take advantage of the for-

tune I threw into your hands to marry her? Even man's treachery and cruelty can hardly go so far as that!" Her tone was so full of scorn that Ferrars cowered and shrank from her. He covered his face with his hand, self-convicted. His own conduct seemed ten times more monstrous put in her words than it had done in his own, and yet her words were true. "Can you not answer and tell me that this base thing is not true?" she said, and she hoped he would be so shocked by the picture of his own villainy that she had shown that even now he would relent and spare her her self-abasement. Ah, what a good woman she would be in future! How she would atone to Lady Margaret for what she had suffered, and free her from the lie that bound her! She passionately, at this moment, longed to be good; she looked eagerly, imploringly at Ferrars, her dark eyes glowing in her pale face.

But Gerald thought of Clara and his promised happiness. Had he not loved her he might have

yielded, but she gave him strength.

"Laura, say what you will, I deserve it all, but I will atone to you so far as money can. Your life shall be my care, but I must marry Miss Jerningham. I cannot break my word to her."

"And is it more sacred than it was to me?" she asked, in cold fury. "Do you think she begins to love you as I do? And you will atone with money! Who gave you the money with which to do it—with which to marry this chit of a girl? Well, hear one thing: You will never marry her! She who has built can throw down, and I who made your

fortune can take it away again, and I will." He looked at her, puzzled—he could only ask himself if disappointment had turned her brain. "When I heard you were playing me false, I prepared to protect myself. I knew that other will must be in existence. I sought it, and I have it in my possession. It gives you a pittance, and the rest goes to Lady Margaret and her children, failing them, to charity."

Lord Ferrars looked at her, his face as pale as ashes.

"For pity's sake, Laura, tell me you lie—you are trying me!"

"Ah! That touches you, does it?" she said, contemptuously. "No, it is quite true; I am not playing a farce."

"Then I am ruined!" he groaned. "Oh, Clara!"

"No, not necessarily ruined. You can purchase prosperity by marrying me."

He started, as if an adder had stung him. And yet ruin! No, he could not face it. He well knew that if what she said was true, he could not marry Clara. Her parents would never let her marry a penniless man, peer though he were.

"How would my marrying you, Laura, alter matters?" he asked.

"This way," she said, in cool tones, that revealed nothing of her wildly beating pulses. "Lady Margaret is married to a villain, and she hates and dreads him. She asks nothing better than to go abroad secretly, hide her name forever and re-

ceive the income her father's will allows her. If this new will were proclaimed, she would, to take possession of her fortune, be obliged to reveal herself to her husband, whom she has successfully eluded so far and whom she wishes to think her dead. Now marry me, and nothing will ever be heard of this will. I will destroy it before you."

"But, Laura," he cried, "this is atrocious!"

"Not a whit more atrocious than your own conduct to me; but if you have scruples of conscience, reconcile them by making a will leaving all your property to Margaret's children," she said, well knowing, once married, she would have as many wills made as she chose. "Margaret now would not accept the money if you resign it. She only asks obscurity and comparative poverty. Riches will but make her husband more earnest in his pursuit of her, and I suppose you have no weakness in favor of enriching him?"

"No; but Laura," he said, "remember even that this man is her husband, and the cause of her troubles has also been your doing."

"And that sounds well from you! That fills the measure of your ingratitude! Great heaven! What a mean shadow of a man have I wasted my heart upon!" she cried. "Ah, if the past could be undone! But it cannot!" she added, with another change of manner. "It cannot! And as I have sinned, I will reap the benefit. I shall almost be glad to know you are so poor a thing!" she said with biting scorn. "I shall not be obliged to look down on myself in comparison with you. Now you

know my terms. Keep your word to me, or see yourself stripped of everything you now enjoy. In either case, if what I hear of the Jerningham parents is true, you will lose your present love."

Gerald raised his head—hitherto bowed beneath her scorn—some dignity was in his manner as he

said:

"This is not a matter, Laura, in which my love can be discussed. It is a mere bargain, and I have to consider whether I can accept it or not. Give me a few days to decide."

It was Laura's turn to writhe at the word "bargain." All the woman that was left in her nature revolted at such a term, however true, from the man she loved so well while despising him so thoroughly, but she hid her wound.

"It is fair you should take time to consider the pros and cons," she said, coolly. "When do you suppose you will have decided?"

"In a very few days," he said. "I dare say you will conquer, for I have no taste for poverty, and, as you say, either way my marriage will be broken off; but I must have time to be alone and decide."

He took up his hat and, with a bow that cut Laura to the heart, he left.

After he had gone, she sank cowering in her chair. Of her ultimate triumph she had no doubt, but at what a price had it been purchased! Yet the "wine was drawn," she must drink it. She believed she knew his weak, selfish nature well enough to feel sure that he would never resolve to give up his race and wealth for the sake of—what? Not

even his bride, for he would lose her. Nothing but a question of form; for, as she had put it, he could not even think that he would wrong Lady Margaret.

She started up. Now she must induce Madge to fall into her plan, and that she knew would be so easy. Gerald had not asked to see her, to be assured of her presence, as she expected he might have done.





CHAPTER XXXIII.

While Lorrimer had been in pursuit of Lady Margaret he had not forgotten the hint Terry had given him as to the possibility of St. John having been previously married. He did not hope too much, for he knew the tendency there is to make such statements among women of a certain order; but on the mere chance it was worth inquiring into, and he had written from Dublin to employ a skillful detective who had been highly recommended to him on account of his sagacity. And when he reached London his first step was to send for this man. He had resolved, if satisfied with him, to employ him to trace Madge. He had lost faith in his own unaided efforts, and he had hitherto shrunk from employing detective aid in finding the woman he loved.

Mr. Martin made his appearance in answer to his summons. A guileless-looking little man he was, and one little likely to inspire respect for his acuteness.

"Have you any information for me, Mr. Martin?" asked Lorrimer.

"Yes, I have," replied the detective. "I will [234]

give you the facts so far as I have ascertained them. I find that Captain St. John, of the ——th regiment of foot, was thought by many to be married while in Canada, and a lady was there who, although she bore another name, frequently had declared in confidence she was his wife. I then traced this lady back to a village near Oxford, where I find she had been living with her mother at the time of her marriage, if any took place. I went to that village and learned that the mother was dead, that one daughter had married and gone abroad, the other had eloped with a Lieutenant St. John. I find the description of the lady agrees exactly with that of the one who was known as Mrs. Varley in Canada. I have endeavored to find a marriage entry by having the books of many London churches examined, but without other clue, it will be a very long and hopeless task. The only hope is of finding the lady, or some news of her death."

"Yes, but," said Lorrimer, somewhat impatiently, "we are searching unsuccessfully after one lady already, and we may have no better fortune with the other."

"That is true, yet I venture to think we may have a better chance with the first Mrs. St. John, for I have positive information that she went to New York, and that she did not land in England with her presumed husband; also that he has sent money to a Mrs. Varley, in New York, but not for the last few months. Now here we have a good clue to go upon. We can advertise for the lady who called at Captain St. John's chambers or we may send to

America and try to find out as much as possible about her there."

"No, we must not advertise. To do that is to put St. John on his guard, and may result in the frustration of our plans."

"Yes, that is my idea, too. My theory is that the lady came to see after her husband and has been cajoled or bribed into returning to America, as she has evidently not been interfering with his movements recently."

"But," said Lorrimer, "do you think a man of St. John's stamp is likely to have married unless for

money?"

"Yes, from what I learn, he was, eight years ago, different from the calculating villain he is now, and many a selfish youth does a disinterested thing to gratify himself, which he tries in vain to undo later."

"What do you propose, then?"

"That the search be conducted in America rather than here, or rather, both here and there, for this reason: While in Canada, Captain St. John had his wife under his control. He could prevent her talking, if he wished, by secluding her, as I find he did. It was, no doubt, while there that he first began to feel the tie irksome, but since she has been left in New York she has been free to form acquaintances, which she has doubtless done, and even if she is not there, possibly all the information we need may be obtained there."

"That seems feasible," said Lorrimer, thoughtfully. "Could you go over yourself?"

" I regret to say I cannot leave London. You see I am not one of a company of detectives. I am on my own hook, as it were, and I should lose a good deal here; and, as I have no correspondence with detectives on the other side of the water, and have never been there, I should be at a great disadvantage. If I might offer a suggestion, it would be that you, sir, are the fittest person to go. You are an American, and another thing I can tell you is that you yourself are being watched by Captain St. John. Your arrival from Ireland has been looked for, and your movements are all under espionage; that is why I carry this book of tailors' patterns," he said, pointing to the morocco case he held. "I am unknown to the general run of detectives, and shall, I expect, be taken for a tailor come to measure you."

Lorrimer was revolving the astounding idea presented to him—that he should go to America and leave Madge still unfound. It did not seem possible he could do that; he must be absent a month. What might not happen in that time?

He told Mr. Martin the reason he could not think

of going.

"You will pardon me, but that is one reason why I think you should go. Your departure, but not its cause, will be known to Captain St. John, who will suppose you have given up the pursuit, and, perhaps, think you believe the lady to have perished in the fire. At all events, he will be less cautious, and I will find the lady if she is living. I will not leave a move he makes unwatched!"

"I must think of this, Mr. Martin, but whether I go or do not, I wish to secure your aid in tracing Lady Margaret St. John."

Mr. Martin bowed; he probably thought it would have been better had that step been taken at first; but he said nothing, and proceeded to note down all that he did not know about the case, and then he took his leave.

Lorrimer sat down to think. What should he do? Reason told him that Margaret would suffer nothing by his absence, that Martin would do for her discovery all he could do if he were on the spot, and more, perhaps, than if he was. He was known to be her champion, and when he seemed to give up her cause, no doubt St. John would be less cautious, believing her friendless, might even get reckless! But if she should be found, and he away where would she go? The idea that his going to New York might result in him finding Lady Margaret virtually a free woman was so tempting that it took away much from his reluctance to leave England. He might go and be back in London within a month! But it seemed like deserting Madge to go from the country, even for a time, where she might be suffering and so sorely need his aid. Just as his thoughts reached this point Terry entered, looking much embarrassed and shame-faced.

"Mr. Lorrymore, sir, I 've come to tell you av a change I 'm thinking of making!"

"You surely are not going to leave me, Terry!" cried Lorrimer.

"No, sir, indeed I'm not; but Jennie and me

have talked it over, an' seeing she's no home in London and wants to stay till Lady Margaret is heard of, we've agreed to get married."

"Bravo, Terry! I thought I'd seen something of the sort between you and Jennie. Well, what do

you want me to do? Give away the bride?"

"Oh, no, sir," said Terry, blushing fiery red with pleasure. "We would not be asking the like av that; but if you could spare me for a few hours till we find a little place to live in, and if you'd not mind my leaving you every evening and return in the morning; as you're not a gentleman that needs valeting in the evening or when you dress, like some, I have nothing to do, anyhow."

"Of course, Terry, it makes no difference to me; but I think I know a way in which your marriage will be the very thing for my plans. Wait a few hours before you look for your little place. Wish Jennie joy for me. And this is to buy her weddingdress." So saying, Lorrimer put a ten-pound note into Terry's hand, telling him he would not want him again till evening.

He then went out and, jumping into a cab, had himself driven to a suburban real-estate agent and there asked for a list of furnished cottages; and when he returned to his chambers, some hours later, he called for Terry, who had returned from a

shopping expedition with his future wife.

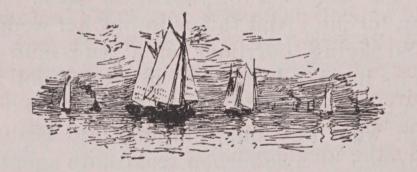
"Terry, I am going to America."

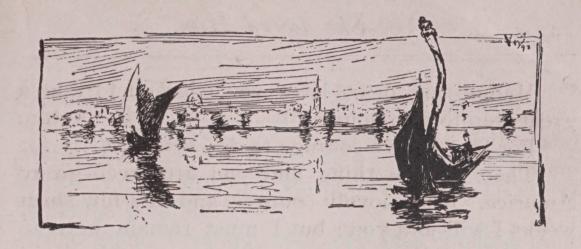
Terry's face was a picture to see. But Lorrimer hastened to reassure him.

"I shall be absent only one month, and before I

return, Lady Margaret may be found and need a home. I have taken a little house at Brompton, into which you and Jennie can go, and keep it for me till my return, when, if it is not needed for Lady Margaret's use, I shall keep house myself, with Jennie to manage for me."

Such an ideal existence as Jennie and himself in Mr. Lorrimer's service was such a glorious prospect for Terry that he almost lost sight, in the contemplation of it, that his master was going away, and even when he did, he was but human; and attached as the faithful fellow was to Lorrimer, the prospect of a month's uninterrupted bliss with Jennie went far to comfort him.





CHAPTER XXXIV.

"My darling!" said Laura, the morning after she had seen Gerald, turning from the window with an appearance of agitation. "Oh, my poor child!"

"What is it?" asked Madge, who in a few hours' peace and comparative comfort had regained much of her old appearance and vigor. "No bad news, I hope, and the large eyes grew wild with fear.

"I trust not. I hope I am mistaken, but I am almost sure that I saw your husband looking up at this house, and I fancied the same thing last night, but fought the idea down."

"Ah, Laura," cried Madge, all her peace gone, "I must go from here, then! I dare not stay. How can he have found me here?"

"I can't think. My poor love, it only shows that in this country you will never be safe from him."

"Then I must go to another!" she cried. "Oh, what is one country more than another to me, if only I need not live as that man's wife?"

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"Madge, my dear, have you courage to take a great step to free yourself?"

"For that I have courage to do anything!"

"Then do one thing and you are free—go to America. It is a lovely country, and in a few short weeks I will join you; but I must remain here to arrange your business matters for you. After you are once safely away, I can safely claim your income for you and see that you get it. Meanwhile, if you agree to this step, I will take your passage at once, go to Liverpool with you and supply you with necessary funds till you get your own money. What do you say?"

"Oh, Laura, anything, anywhere, I care not, only that I may never see that hated face again! Do just as you like; you are so good to take me and my troubles to your heart so!"

"Good, my sweet? I am not good. Now, you think you will not falter at the last?"

"No, no! I shall feel safe when I am once on a steamer. Oh, surely I shall be safe with the Atlantic between us!"

"I think you will."

"I am so glad you have thought of this, Laura. It seems to me at least now I may look forward to peace. I thought of the continent, but France or Germany would be but a few hours' journey to him and no protection. But, Laura, you say you will come?"

"I will very soon, as soon as I can settle matters."
Laura allowed no time to be lost. Taking a cab,
she went at once to the steamer office at Regent's

Circus, and found the *Gallia* sailed the next day, but by travelling to Liverpool that night, they would catch it. Then buying a few things Madge would require for the voyage, she returned home as fast as possible.

The same evening, with her face muffled in a veil, her figure hidden in the ample folds of a travelling-cloak, Madge started with Laura for Liverpool. The vessel sailed early in the morning, and the midnight train, the only one they had been able to get ready for, would be barely in time. And Laura, now her plans were so near fruition, grew nervously afraid some detention might occur, and this steamer missed. But fortune seemed to favor her in all things; for the train was exactly on time, and there was just time to get in a carriage and drive to the tender Satellite, which was taking the passengers on board. There was no time for anything but a hurried leave-taking. Laura might have gone in the tender, but Madge did not know it, and Laura was too eager to drop her part of sympathizing and sorrowing friend to avail herself of the privilege. She was thankful to see the last of the pale, pathetic face, whose pathos was due entirely to her own wickedness.

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Madge was safely on her voyage; for Laura had not left Liverpool in spite of her haste, till she had seen the tender return and discharge its freight of sorrowing friends, but among those people Lady Madge was not. Then the *Gallia* was seen to leave

the Mersey, and Laura returned to town bent on triumph.

One more thing she had now to do—she must get possession of the certificate of marriage from Mrs. Mortimer. But she was worn out with excitement and fatigue of her night journey, and before doing a thing more, she felt she must have a few hours' rest. She would go to bed right there, and sleep till morning, if she could—the first mistake clever Laura had yet made. For, while she slept, a slight derangement of her plan was occurring downstairs.

When Mr. Martin had suggested Mr. Lorrimer's going to New York, he had by no means relinquished hope of finding news in London; he had been seeking an old valet of St. John's, one of the army of unpaid who had had the privilege of waiting on him. The particular one sought by Mr. Martin was he who must have been with him at the date of his marriage, if it took place; this man he had now found, and at last had a definite clue. He was told Mr. St. John had visited a lady as Mr. Varley in Pimlico for a few months before going to Canada. He had often seen the lady who was called Mrs. Varley, but he had never thought she was his wife. He described her, and the description was that of the lady the detective wanted. He went at once to the address in Pimlico, and there learned far more than he expected-how the unhappy Mrs. Varley had been back there, and had died. From the landlady Mr. Martin obtained the address the dying woman had given her, to which she wished her trunks to be sent when she should

die; and to Mrs. Mortimer, at Henley, the indefatigable little man went, and from there was sent to St. John's Wood, and at the very time when Laura yielded to nature's needs and decided to rest, he was closeted below with Mrs. Mortimer.

"Will you let me take this certificate, madam, if I give you a written acknowledgment that I have it in my possession? I use it only to reinstate you sister's memory and to free Lady Margaret Doyle."

"Certainly take it," said Mrs. Mortimer, who did not realize the risk she might have been running had Mr. Martin not been what he pretended to be. She was a woman of simple faith and unsuspicious; happily, in this case, she was in no danger.

Something of this Mr. Martin conveyed to her

when he said:

"Madam, I take it, and you are safe in giving it to me, as my interest is with yours. Had I been an agent of Mr. St. John, in disguise, you would, in giving me this paper, lose all your power."

Mrs. Mortimer looked terrified at the mistake she

might have made.

Then Mr. Martin handed her his acknowledgment of having received a paper certifying the marriage of Captain St. John to Cicely Warren, at St. Judes Church, Islington.

"That, I think, will make you safe. In case of accidents, you have the church and its register to

fly to."

Before Laura had quite fallen into the land of dreams Mr. Martin had left, with the coveted certificate in his pocket.

Mrs. Mortimer had somehow an uneasy sense that she would be blamed by Laura, who had promised to do everything in the matter, when she should find that she had accepted the aid of some one else; and she tried to avoid meeting her for a while, to put off the evil hour. She left home, therefore, for the day, leaving a note for Miss Perceval, expressing regret that, having to catch an early train, she could not see her before starting.

When Laura read the note brought up with her breakfast, she felt a momentary vexation. It was a check.

"Pshaw! What matter? It is only a delay. She will be back in a day or so, and I can get it then. She has no one to whom she would confide the matter but me. I have no cause to be uneasy."





CHAPTER XXXV.

For three days Lady Margaret paid the usual tribute to the sea and remained helplessly seasick below. The third day she was better and able to go on deck.

For her, sad as the cause of her expatriation, it was not the grief it would have been to many a girl of her age. She had no ties of love to leave. Her father was dead, and Laura, to whom she now clung with tender love, was coming to her, and she was escaping from her hated husband. And as she paced the broad deck and looked over the free and boundless ocean, her heart rose. She felt that she was going to a fuller life and to lose that terrible sense of fear that had lately haunted her. No man in this land to which she was going would have a right to put his hand on her as his wife. One secret pang she felt when she thought of Lorrimer—that tender, manly heart that had loved her so well, whose worth she knew, but of whose love she scarcely dared think. When the sea, the safeguard

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of distance, was between them, she would write to him and thank him more warmly than she had ever yet dared do, for his goodness. It was not quite like going to a strange country, since it was the land that gave her such a friend. She would have given much to have seen him before she left, she thought; and yet when she remembered the repressed fire ever ready to burst forth, she knew it was better there had been no formal parting. And then a sudden thought, like a sunbeam, crossed her mind, seeming to flood the future with glory, yet dyeing her cheeks with a ruddy glow, suffusing her eyes with tender light—the thought that, had there been such parting, it would not have been for long; that he would soon have been in New York.

She was terror-stricken at the joy she discovered in herself at such a possibility. Could it be that she cared so much for this friend! Ah, then, that letter must never be written, for would it not bring him to her vicinity! Knowing her own heart now, dare she do it? Some instinct warned her of her own weakness, and she knew now there was another danger left behind. It was not all pain as yet, it was so sweet to dwell upon, to know she was so well loved by such a man!

Many were the remarks among the passengers on the peculiarity of such a young and beautiful girl, evidently so highly bred, travelling alone, apparently knowing no one, and they referred to their passenger lists and wondered who Miss M. Perceval could be.

It had been agreed between Madge and Laura

that either her own name or that of her husband might lead to his finding out that she had gone to America, and, therefore, she had adopted Laura's name.

This "Miss Perceval" made no acquaintance, permitted no deck companions, yet she seemed far from haughty, and certainly not shy. But she paced the deck alone, frequently staying up quite late, avoiding only the saloon.

One night, so pacing, she leant over the vessel's side; they were eight days out and nearing the American shores. For the first time she began to realize her own loneliness, and the tears filled her eyes and dropped into the salt water. How long she stood thus she did not know, she was aroused to a sense of passing time by a voice in passing:

"I think I shall go below, it is getting late!"

Why did her heart bound at those words? Whose voice was it? The speaker had passed on. She turned in time to see a tall form pass into the companion-way. That was all—that voice was Lorrimer's surely, that form looked like his, but how could it be! Could such chances happen? She saw nearly all the ladies had gone below, and she went herself. How she longed, yet dreaded to know whether she could have been misled by an accidental resemblance in tone! She regretted that she had so persistently avoided the saloon, and that she had never once looked at her passenger-list, had not even taken the trouble to preserve it.

The next morning she asked the stewardess to procure her a passenger-list; and when it was brought she cast her eye down it till she came to the letter L. Yes, there was the name, "J. Lorrimer."

It was with a strangely mingled feeling she read the assurance that this friend was so near—half doubt, half pleasure—but the latter soon gave way to fear. For if he should see her, he would surely never leave her to herself in the strange city to which she was going, and now she knew her own heart, she was afraid. In London, in Dublin, secure in her own indifference, she had accepted his care gratefully, but now it was so different.

Although she had never yet in all the days they had been on board chanced to meet him on deck, now that she knew he was there, she felt it impossible he should not see her if she went up. She remained all day in the ladies' cabin, till she felt sick for want of air, and then in the dark, before the moon rose, she crept up on deck. The sea was rougher than it had been; ropes were stretched along the deck, and it was difficult to keep a footing without them.

Many ladies were tumbling about and being saved by ready masculine arms, and laughing hilariously. And Madge, fearing she might fall, took a seat till her feet got numb with cold. She had gained confidence now, she had been up an hour and seen nothing of Lorrimer. She knew he must keep with the officers up on the bridge, and rarely be on deck. So, to warm her chilled blood she rose and started to walk. The vessel was more steady, and she was able to keep her feet. Just as she

reached the captain's room and was about to turn back again, however, the vessel gave a lurch, she slipped on the wet deck and fell. A gentleman came out of the room and sprang to her aid. The light from the lamp fell on her face as she stammered her thanks, but the gentleman uttered a cry.

"What! Am I dreaming? Lady Margaret! Madge! My darling, my own! Have I found you,

and here?"

It was John Lorrimer, and Madge stood white and trembling, yet unspeakably happy before him.

"Mr. Lorrimer!" she said, as quietly as if her heart was not beating so that she feared he would hear it.

"What a strange chance this is!" she added, tremulously. But to his eager heart, shocked out of its studied reserve, her words seemed cold and apathetic.

"A chance! No, it is not a chance, it is a Providence! Oh, how I have sought you! And you, who are light and life itself to me, receive me so coldly, as if I was a mere chance acquaintance," he said, reproachfully.

Was it so? Did she so well conceal her feelings? Well, it was better so. She must keep up that idea

in his mind.

"A chance acquaintance? No," she said. "A dear friend, rather; but you forget my surprise at being lifted from the deck and finding myself thanking you instead of a stranger."

Her words were almost flippant in their carelessness, and Lorrimer was chilled by them into self-

control. He took her arm under his and walked with her, she telling him all that had happened to her since her husband had come to her in Dublin; and in spite of his determined self-repression, she felt sometimes a convulsive pressure of his arm on her hand as he heard her sufferings. And then he told her how the first officer and the doctor were intimate friends of his, and that he had been so wretched, so disinclined to mingle with the other passengers that he had kept entirely aloof, except at meal-times; and thus they had not met till now.

What a rapturous walk that was to Madge! And yet marred by the ever-recurring thought that the moment she landed she must hide herself from him. She could not trust herself to be with him. Her nature was not a self-contained or cold one, and safety lay only in flight.





CHAPTER XXXVI.

At the time when Laura Perceval was breakfasting and comforting herself on Mrs. Mortimer's sudden move, Lord Ferrars was thinking in distress of his course. Three days had elapsed and, though he thought he knew from the beginning what his answer must be, he put off the evil hour. But now he could do so no longer; he *must* let Laura know. He was white with contending emotions as he came to this resolution. He took pen and paper, sat down; and then, suddenly pushing it from him, rose and once more fought the battle over again.

"What! Give up all? Clara's fortune, everything—for what? Only a chimera, a scruple that, as she says, can wrong no one, since Madge dare claim nothing. And then I could compensate her that she would be really as well off. And ought I not to think of Clara? She loves me, poor darling! And to give this up is to lose her beyond hope. Ah, what a wretched alternative! But if I marry her, should I ever dare to think—could I dare to have children and let them wear my name, my coronet, when I have dragged it in the dust? No, by heaven! A weak, unprincipled fool I may have

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been, but I will never be the first Earl Ferrars who has soiled the 'scutcheon by crime! Noblesse oblige! I will throw up everything and go to America and raise sheep—anything rather than be rich on the proceeds of crime. No, Laura. You have built on my weakness, and I am ashamed to think you had reason to do it."

He sat down and wrote rapidly for an hour; then ringing his bell, sent a man with the letter to St. John's Wood.

He knew he had beggared himself for "an idea," but somehow, even with the knowledge that the girl who had stirred everything that was best in his nature was lost to him, he yet felt happier than he had done since he had seen Laura. He had fought a battle with his worse nature and had won.

* * * * * *

Laura was impatiently wondering why she did not hear from Gerald, or rather see him, when his letter was brought. She did not like the sight of the thick packet. He *could* only-have to tell her that he agreed to her terms, and would see her. He must have spent this interval in getting free of his engagement. It could be nothing else he had to say.

Her hands trembled with anxiety as she opened the letter, and then an awful change came over her expectant face as she read, whitening it to the lips, her black eyes glowed with somber fire, and when she had read every word, her breath came in low gasps. She sank on a couch, and fought against the mad rage and despair that urged her to desperate deeds. In the end her strong will conquered, and she rose—tense, rigid, but unnaturally calm.

"Now, evil, be thou my good!" she exclaimed, as she tore the letter into a thousand fragments and scattered it.

She dressed herself carefully, and when she saw her own white face in the glass she shuddered. She hardly knew that hard desperate woman who looked back at her.

Half an hour later she was at Lawrence St. John's chambers. He was not there; his new man told her he had gone out and might not be back until evening. She wrote a note and left it for him, and then she went to the steamer office to inquire about steamers for New York. She was restless for action. That man, that villain, must be beggared without delay! Not a day longer than she could help should he enjoy his wealth! How bitterly she regretted that she had sent Madge away. How sure she had been of her power. The little backbone Ferrars had displayed she had not credited him with. She had believed he would succumb to her wholly. Now as soon as ever Madge could be got back, she must, and she had determined already in her mind a way in which the will should be found. She would make it look weatherbeaten and then visit Melford, and, walking in the grounds, this weather-stained document would be found, as if the murderer had dropped it. To induce Madge to come back and claim her own, she would assure her she had seen St. John, who, if she would allow him half the amount of the income her father had left,

would agree to leave her quite unmolested. But all this, she knew, written in a letter, would not bring her back. She must go to America and add her blandishments to persuade her. She had found a German steamer would leave Southampton that very day. She would barely have time to go home and pack a fewthings and take the train. She had told Lawrence to come and see her that evening, but she could not wait. She wrote another note for him, telling him she had found out where Madge was and had gone for her, and that she was anxious to bring matters to a crisis as soon as possible after her return, which would be in a month. This she addressed to him, and giving it to Mrs. Mortimer's servant, she told her to give it to the gentleman who should call that evening and ask for her.

Laura cared very little now for that certificate of marriage that was to hold St. John in check. She cared not for power over him now; his interest was hers.

An hour later she was on her way to Southampton, and that evening she embarked on the steamer *Wilna*, bound for New York.

* * * * * * *

When Mrs. Mortimer returned, her servant gave her the note that Laura had left for St. John and one for herself, explaining her absence. And this man, who had killed her sister, was coming to the house, and she knew it. Well, she would see him, she would accuse him and, although she had no proof, he should not dare to think the crime she was convinced he had committed was unsuspected.

She gave orders that when he came he was to be shown up to Laura's room, and then she would take up the note herself and give it him.

It so happened that when Lawrence called, Mrs. Mortimer had a visitor; the servant, therefore, asked him up into Laura's room and begged him to wait for a few minutes. It was getting dark, yet the gas was not lighted. There was a pretty little balcony, and, after waiting a few minutes, he thought longingly of a cigar.

"Well, I suppose Laura will not thank me to smoke among all this prettiness, but I will fumigate her flowers!"

He stepped out and, lighting his cigar, seated himself rather dangerously, it seemed, on the low railing. He had taken a little too much brandy, as he had been apt to do lately, and instead of steadying his nerves it weakened them. He had not really been in the house many minutes, but the hour was just that when night falls apace, and, looking into the garden below, he was reminded of the apparition of Cicely he had seen when last here. Furtively he looked down, but nothing was visible.

"Curse that girl! Why didn't she light the gas?"

Suddenly his gaze was transfixed! Right before him, in the window, seeming to belong to nothing, was a white hand, and on it a ring—again the ring. He saw nothing but that. He saw not in the darkness the long, dark figure of Mrs. Mortimer, nor the white face above, only that hand and the ring. And

then it advanced toward him. With a scream of horror he recoiled and, losing his balance, fell.

Mrs. Mortimer dropped the note she held and rushed down-stairs, screaming as she went, and then out of the house, followed by the servants.

There lay Lawrence St. John senseless on the ground. His fall had been from no great height; no bones seemed broken; he was only stunned, perhaps, in spite of that still face with the *something* in it that made Mrs. Mortimer shudder. Then the doctor came, and to the surprise and horror of every one, pronounced life extinct. He had fallen on his head, and his neck was broken.

Mrs. Mortimer alone was not horrified; only struck with a strange awe. She knew nothing of the awful significance that ring had for him. She believed he had been terrified by her likeness to her sister.

It amounted to the same thing: A guilty conscience had killed him!





CHAPTER XXXVII.

The sun shone brilliantly over New York Bay as the *Gallia* steamed into port. John Lorrimer stood looking at the beautiful scene, his dark eyes flashing with happiness, his handsome face animated and enthusiastic. He was approaching the land he loved, with the woman he loved. He refused to think of anything further as he eagerly pointed out to her one object of interest after another.

"I do not wonder you love this beautiful country," said Madge. But in her eye there was a tender sadness he had tried in vain to chase away. But she guarded her secret so well, he did not guess her fear of her own heart and that in these three days, while tasting such bliss as he had never dreamed, she was maturing a resolution as cruel to herself as to him; and while he was so joyfully expatiating on the charms of his own country and picturing to himself how, as a brother, he would help her to forget the past and enjoy the future, she was telling herself she must fly from this dangerous pleasure and planning how to do it. She knew there were other great cities besides New York, and

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tried to fix on one to which she might go directly she could get from under Lorrimer's watchful care.

Lorrimer watched her with a puzzled, anxious expression as they left the noble vessel, and went through all the tiresome details incidental on landing in this new world.

Nothing seemed to excite her curiosity or interest. She was preoccupied with some thought he tried hard to understand. Could it be regret at leaving England? But had she not already expressed joy at being free from haunting fear?

"I will take you to the Albemarle; that's the quietest hotel I know of," he said. "And when you are rested we will talk over your plans."

"I thank you. And where do you go!" she asked.

"Oh, I'm at home in New York," he replied. "I have a brother here, and we have bachelor quarters together. I wish I had a sister or a mother, for your sake."

Lady Madge was very thankful he had not. How difficult would it have been to escape feminine attentions! She little knew yet of man's persistence. How, when actuated by absorbing love, it could encompass her more infinitely than any feminine care.

When they reached the hotel, Lady Madge went to the rooms Lorrimer ordered for her. She found he had engaged an elegant suite overlooking Broadway, and smiled sadly to herself to think how short a time she would need them.

She had wished him good-by and thanked him as he left her on the stairs. She had purposely infused nothing of the "farewell;" she meant it to be in her tones; she longed to do so, but conquered herself; he must not guess.

She went into her bedroom and refreshed herself with a bath and a change of clothing, and just as she was ready to come forth and pursue her plan of leaving the hotel and starting for Philadelphia before she should see Lorrimer again, a waiter entered with an exquisite luncheon.

She had not thought of food, so full of her plan had she been, but the sight of it reminded her how necessary it was for her to eat.

"Was this lunch ordered?" she asked, not quite knowing whether such things might not be supplied as a matter of course in this country.

"Yes, madam; the gentleman ordered it."

It was very sweet to her to have her necessities catered to by the man she loved.

Scarcely had she lunched when Lorrimer sent up his card and a penciled request that she would see him for a few moments on business.

Lady Madge was taken aback somewhat. She had calculated on his having to go away to his own quarters to remove the travel stains. She had no conception of the convenient possibilities of an American hotel. But she could not refuse to see him, that was certain.

When he entered he had evidently lately gone through the barber's hands, so that her hopes that he might yet be forced to go away to dress was disappointed. He held in his hands a bunch of superb Marechal Niel roses, whose long, languid heads started from a nest of Parma violets.

"Let me give you a few of our New World blossoms," he said, "as a token that you haven't left all the roses of life behind you."

Madge took the blossoms and held them lovingly to her. Ah, how sad it was she had to fly from this man—this love that would to illumine her path! But she knew she was reaping as she had sown.

"I came up to ask you whether you like your rooms, or if you would rather let me seek for you a quiet home in a private family. I recommend the latter."

"Yes," said Madge, hastily. "I have to live economically, and this must be expensive, but you must please let me manage for myself—you—you must not—"

"Must not what?" he asked. "You surely do not mean that I must not do for you what a brother would? You do not think, I hope, that, having found you here and alone, I will let you act as if you were friendless? Besides, you could not! You could not take the first step in this city alone, you are too young and beautiful not to be open to misconception!"

Madge had feared this, yet she must risk it. Yes, while she had believed herself indifferent to it, she might have accepted his brotherly care, now she dare not.

"Come, Lady Margaret, make up your mind to trust yourself to my care, and we will drive at once to a lady I know, who will advise us where to seek what you want. I want, too, to show you some of the beauties of my native city." "Oh, no, no!" cried Madge. "Do leave me please do, I am not well, I cannot do anything to day!"

Alas, if she had expected then to send him from her, she was mistaken.

"Not well!" he cried, and all his affected coolness was gone. He came to her and looked anxiously in her face. "Not well, my dearest! What is the matter?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing! It only means you must leave me! Ah, don't you understand—that I—that you must not be with me, that I am a married woman in the sight of the law, though not in the sight of God."

"My darling, what change is this? You are not more married now than you were in London, and you had no such fear. Great heaven, you cannot think, because you are here alone, you are in danger from me!"

"Oh, no, no!"

"What is it then? Ah!" he cried, for some new tenderness in her eyes sent a ray of joy to his heart. "Is it possible you yourself have changed, that you love me, my darling?"

She hid her face in her hands, but he could see the burning blushes covering her neck and brow.

"My dear one, don't say one word, I see, I understand, and I thank God! But you need fear nothing, I know now that we cannot be only friends, and more than friends we must not be, yet there is deep joy in my heart, darling. Even this is something to live for! I am going, you need not fear

me! I will not come near you. I will send the lady I spoke of, who will counsel and befriend you. I promise never to see you alone, even if the chance offers after this."

He seized her hand and pressed a passionate kiss on it, and then, without another word or look, he left the room.

After he had gone she ran to the window and watched till she saw his tall form emerge and cross into Madison Square.

"Now, quick, I must go! He means to be true to his word, but I dare not trust. I must leave this before he can do anything to prevent."

And with hurried, feverish hands she packed the little baggage she had, and rang the bell to make inquiries about modes of travel and time for departure.

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Lorrimer bethought himself after he had left the Albemarle that he had been so engrossed by Madge, he had not gone to his club, to which he had ordered Martin to send any news he might have by telegraph. He did not expect any telegram, but it was perhaps as well to see.

He went direct to the Manhattan and, to his surprise, found two cablegrams had been waiting for him several days. He tore one open; it was from Martin:

"Certificate found. Wife was living after date of second marriage."

He stared at the message as if he could not understand.

Can it be? He almost forgot that he had still one telegram unopened; he was going away with it still in his hand, when he remembered it. He opened it anxiously, as if it contained a fiat of fate that might reverse the news of the first message.

Fraught with fate indeed was it. Happy fate! Its

words were:

"St. John killed by accident. Letter."

How he got from the office and to the Albemarle Hotel he never knew, so intoxicated was he with happiness. He pictured to himself Madge, darling Madge, aglow with joy as he had first seen her. When she should hear his news she would not believe it, and then it would be his sweet task to convince her. His heart throbbed joyously, and all his blood coursed through his veins like liquid fire as he drove to the hotel, and hastily wrote a line on his card and handed it to the hall porter who, looking at it, returned it.

"The lady went away a few minutes ago, sir."

"Gone! Gone away! Impossible!"

He rushed from the man to the office, and there found that Madge had indeed gone.

"Poor, dear, mad girl!" he murmured, all his bright hopes terribly dashed. "Why could fate be so cruel as to send her wandering, when happiness awaited her."

Then he bethought him that she had doubtless procured information at the office, which would give him a clue to where she was gone. He found on inquiry that she had inquired about Phila-

delphia trains, and had taken a hack to the Pennsylvania Depot.

Lorrimer hastily asked the time the train would start, and found she had gone an hour too soon, and that he would have time to stop her.

Anxiously he endured the inevitable delays that beset the hack before it could reach its destination. Many times he believed he could have walked much more quickly—for it was before the days of rapid transit; but common sense prevailed, and he kept his seat till he found himself before the ferry, and then he sprang out, rushed past every one, and there, bewildered, frightened, pale and unutterably sad, stood Madge, poor, forlorn traveller.

Ah, it was good to see the rush of joy in her face, the glad little cry with which she started to meet him as he entered the ferry-house; and then, remembering her resolution, hung back. But he was by her side, looking with happy eyes down into the little, sad face that was so soon to light with joy. But he could not waste the bliss of seeing it, of telling his story in that place. Taking her hand, he said in a broken voice:

- "Come, my little would-be traveller! I have news for you."
 - "I dare not-I cannot."
 - "You dare and you can."

Overpowered by something masterful in his tone, she yielded; and when they were once in the carriage he turned to her and said in a voice shaken and trembling:

"My darling, you are mine! Nothing comes be-

tween us. You were never really married to that man. See!" He saw she could not believe, and he put the written words before her. And then, with a low, joyful cry, she turned to him. "My darling, my precious, my sweet little girl!" he cried, straining her passionately to his breast and raining kisses on her face, hands and hair.

Was there ever such happiness since the world began as that of these two happy people? They thought not, at all events.



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CHAPTER XXXVIII.

A wild night at sea and a brave vessel struggling with the wave, her saloon full of frightened men and women, who look at each other in awe as one tremendous wave after another washes over the deck and they hear the ominous orders given above.

The good ship Wilna is in deadly peril. Her screw broke before the storm, and she is almost

helpless before the wind and waves.

One woman, with a wild, white face, is more terrified than the rest. She speaks to no one, she has not done so since she came on board at Southampton, and now she paces the saloon, her hands clenched on either side.

"Heavens, what have I done? I am not fit to die!" she mutters, and, as one terrible sound after another reveals the extremity of their peril, her despairing face is one to strike terror into the beholders.

"That unhappy woman has an evil conscience," one remarks to another, but she heeds nothing and only listens, and then there comes a cry:

"The boats! The boats!" and the doors are flung open and the passengers reach the deck, [268]

clinging to one another to save themselves from being blown down. Boats—a hopeless effort in such a sea.

The woman with the white face looks terrorstricken at them.

"I will not go in one, I should sink it," she moans to herself. Then, grasping something in her hand, she asks a tall man near her, if he is a good swimmer.

"No, worse luck, for we shall all need our swimming powers to-night! That man there," pointing to a short, stout man, "is said to be the best swimmer on board!"

Even at that hour Laura Perceval looked at the man who spoke with a kind of vague wonder. What a free conscience he must have! So near death, no swimmer and so calm! But she had something to do; she would not live through this night, she knew. She felt whoever else survived the wreck of the Wilna, she would not.

Holding on by anything she could grasp, she made her way to the stout man, who was a good swimmer, and addressed him:

"Sir, I have a packet here of great importance to a great family. I shall not see the morning light. Will you take it?"

"Many of us will not see the morning light, I'm thinking," said the man; "but I'll do anything if I live—"

"You will live. I think it—I feel it," she said in prophetic tones. "Take this, and when you reach a shore send it to its destination."

She handed a packet, wrapped in oilskin, to him, and he took it and placed it in his breast.

"I will do my best to carry out your wishes. If I live, it shall be done; but don't you give up the ghost like this. You may get through as well as any of us. Stick to me; I'll do my best for you."

Laura shook her head drearily.

"I will drag no one down with me. I have done such wrong that I hope for no mercy. My doom is sealed."

An hour later not a vestige remained to tell where the Wilna had battled with the waves. One boat lived on the sea with its freight of human life, but no woman was in it. Laura Perceval's foreboding came true; she never saw again the morning light.

Six months later. Mr. and Mrs. Lorrimer—or Lady Margaret Lorrimer, had she so chosen to call herself—were standing on the Cunard wharf waiting the arrival of the *Scythia*. Our Madge has taken kindly to her adopted country. She looks like a rose as, beaming with happiness, she stands there, watching the beautiful vessel draw near. And while they wait we will tell what brought them there.

It was some time after Lorrimer discovered his own happiness before he remembered that he had left Jennie and Terry, now a married couple, to keep a nest warm for Madge; and when he did come down to earthly things sufficiently to take heed of them, he told Madge, and asked if they

should return to England after their marriage, which was to take place immediately, or whether she could be content to remain in this country.

"Ah, dearest, I found my happiness here. Let us stay," she said.

And they had married and stayed. Then Lorrimer had formally written and informed Lord Ferrars, as head of the house, of the marriage.

Gerald waited for weeks for Laura to fulfill her threat; but he heard nothing. And then had come news of the wreck of the Wilna, and the name of Laura Perceval among the passengers. He then went to Mrs. Mortimer to learn if it could possibly be the Laura, for he knew nothing of her intended voyage, and learned from her that she had actually started for America.

His danger was over, for he began to believe it was an idle threat she had used; that she had had no other will to bring forward, and he began to be quite comfortable, when the letter from Lorrimer came, and showed him why Laura had gone to America, and that it had been to bring Madge back. But Laura was dead. He had every possible search made for the will, but it was not to be found, and then he felt he might, with a clear conscience, marry Clara. He hastened the wedding, and the parents, only too glad to make sure of their wealthy and noble son-in-law, agreed to the early marriage.

But while the wedding-party was still in the house—as the bride and groom were about to get into their carriage to drive away on their wedding-tour—a short, stout man appeared, and said he had

pressing business with Lord Ferrars. In vain the servants told him he could not be seen; the man would not go; he stood on the steps till he saw Lord Ferrars appear, then spoke:

"My lord, I bring you a message from the dead!"
Lord Ferrars stopped suddenly; his lips blanched.
Instinctively his thoughts turned to unhappy Laura,
as they had been doing all day. Was her vengeance pursuing him beyond the grave?

He took a package from the man's hand.

"I promised a lady in the last hours in which she lived to deliver this to its address, if I lived—I have done so."

Ferrars looked at the man; he was prosperous looking, but not rich, evidently.

"I thank you," he said. "You have been at some expense to bring this, no doubt; allow me—"

"Not a penny, my lord. I was coming to London on my own business."

He raised his hat and walked briskly away, leaving the packet in the bridegroom's hands.

He thrust it in his pocket and joined his bride in the carriage.

The new Lady Ferrars saw her husband's agitated face, and asked him what caused it.

"My darling, if you will allow me, I will see if I have any cause or not."

He cut open the package. It contained a note and the missing will of the late Lord Ferrars. The note he opened with trembling fingers. Did she bequeath him a curse on his wedding day? But no! He read:

"GERALD.—When you read this I shall be no more. I send you the will. Act as you choose. I forgive you."

"Clara," said Lord Ferrars, "what would you say if, instead of six months on the continent of

Europe, we spend it in America?"

And then he began his married life well. He told her all—that everything depended on what he should now do, and that he had but to tear that document in half to keep his wealth. And Clara as a true woman, strengthened the beginning of good that had dawned when he fought his fight with temptation, and honor triumphed.

"Darling, we will go anywhere, but we can live

poor; we cannot afford to live dishonored."

Ah! He had chosen his wife well. How did such as he deserve such as she?

And so they embarked on the Scythia at Liver-pool instead of going to Paris; and when Madge and her husband came to meet Terry and Jennie, who had elected to come to the New World, her cousin and his bride, whom she had never seen, stepped off the vessel.

I pass over the surprise of both.

When Terry and Jennie, looking proud of each other, and very happy, had been welcomed heartily by those they had so affectionately served, and sent in a hack to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Lorrimer, Madge insisted on his cousin and his wife going with them also, instead of to a hotel, and then as the four drove uptown, Gerald placed in Lorrimer's hands the missing will, saying:

"That is what brought me, Lorrimer!"

Thus, after all her trials, Madge found herself an enormously rich woman; and she wanted no wealth. Lorrimer's fortune was very ample. She consulted her husband, and they both agreed that, as no position could be more cruel than that of a man with a great name and a small fortune, and as she, in electing to live in America, was leaving the duties she owed to those whom her presence would have benefited, she should divide her income with Gerald that he might keep up the traditions of the family worthily.

Thus, when Gerald returned to England, it was as a rich man.

In his case, honesty had certainly been the best policy. While Gerald was with his cousin, too, he learned the whole story of her life, and who had really murdered Lord Ferrars.

"Of course, this must be made known," said Gerald. "There may yet be people in England who think you may have been implicated, dear Margaret."

"Let them so think," she answered, in her radiant happiness. "I can afford it, and let the unhappy dead rest."

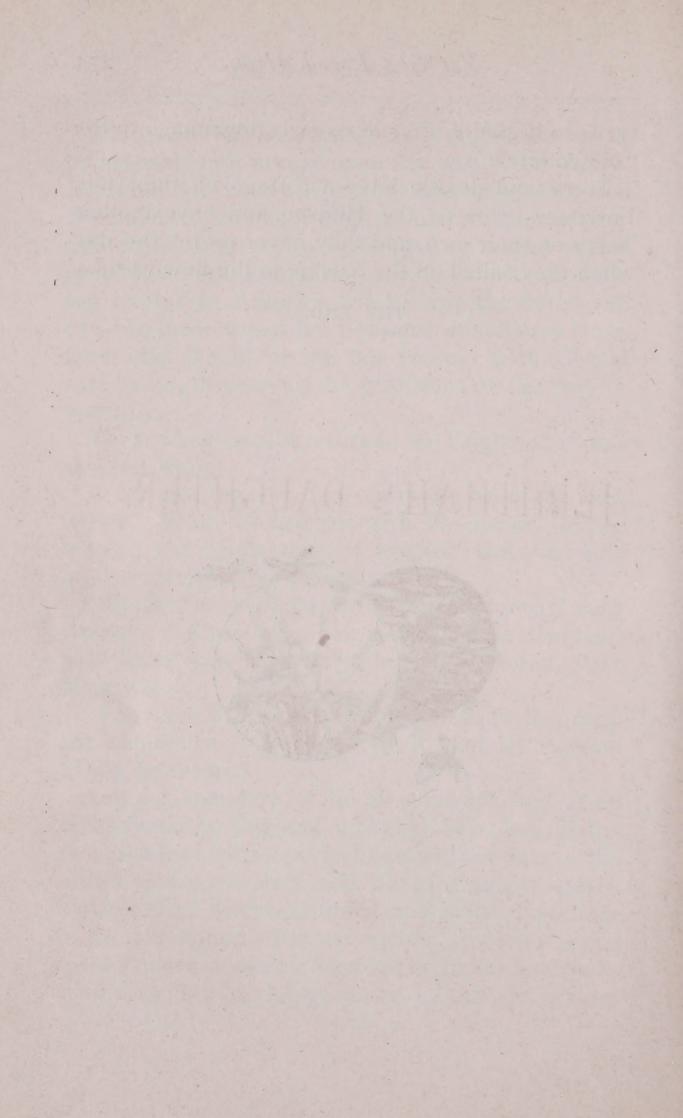
And yet, somehow, it did all come out, and when Madge went to England with her baby boy, Bally-reen, she met with a perfect ovation, not only in the places that knew her well, but all English society had heard of her vicissitudes, and seemed anxious to do her honor. But her success as a beauty and society queen does not wean her from her husband's country where her happy home is, and she always

turns to it gladly, after her yearly pilgrimage to the "old country."

Terry and Jennie have a cottage on the estate Lorrimer owns on the Hudson, and have another Terry of their own, and they never regret the day when they sailed on the *Scythia* to the new world.

THE END.





JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER.

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JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER,

BY JULIA MAGRUDER.

CHAPTER I.

JEPHTHAH, the Gileadite, had only one child, a young maiden named Namarah, and beside her, he had neither son nor daughter. Now, Jephthah was a mighty man of valor, and his name was feared exceedingly, albeit he had a heart most kind and tender, and the chief treasure of his heart was even the maiden Namarah; for he had been father and mother and all in all to the young child, whose other parent had died, and left her to the great soldier, as the sole fruit of a happy wedded love, too early cut off by death.

As the child grew into girlhood, it was known to her, by comparing her father to the other men she saw, that he was not as they; a gloom was ever on his face, except when his eyes were upon her, and then, indeed, he would look glad and smile. Na-

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marah always felt that it was the early death of her young mother that made her father's face look sad, even (when aglow with pride she would look at him all in glittering armor) as he rode his magnificent war-horse at the head of his host. For this, her heart was very tender to him, and she strove the more to make up to him by the sweet service of her love for what he had lost. As she grew older, and stories of the sin and folly of the world were told her, there was known to her a deeper reason yet for her father's melancholy. The stern grief of childhood had preceded the grief of age, and, though she only gained her knowledge by putting many small hints and observations together, she learned that this gentle father had been himself a neglected and abused son, whose mother he had never known, and whose father and brethren had treated him with cruelty and injustice. As his father's younger sons grewup, they hated Jephthah because he was stronger and of a nobler presence than themselves, and they thrust him out of their father's house, that they and their mother might be no more offended at the sight of him. So Jephthah fled from his brethren and dwelt in the land of Tob. But so great a soldier was he, so majestic in appearance and so valiant in fight, that the fame of him went abroad throughout the land, and came even unto the ears of his brethren.

In the land of Tob he took a wife, and there were spent his days of happiness, and there was born unto him the child Namarah. But it came to pass, before the babe could stand upon its feet, the wife

of Jephthah died and was buried, and in all the world there was no comfort to the man save in the child Namarah. Her he watched and tended as his all in all, and so great was his love and kindness to her, that her heart was knit to his, even as his to hers. And in all the land there was no maiden so fair and beautiful. Her eyes were like cool streams of limpid water, for clearness and for blueness like the heaven above. Her skin for whiteness, was like the leaves of some little woodland flower on which the sun hath never shone, but which the gentle winds of shady places have fanned and kept cool. Her hair, wonderful, soft and dusky, was like the brown leaves of the forest, and when she shook it down, it wrapped the slimness of her body round and clothed her like a garment. Her voice, when she spoke, was ever sweet and low, as the cooing of the wood-doves in the branches, and when she lifted it up and sang with the maidens that were her companions, it was, for clearness, like the sky-lark's.

What wonder that Namarah was unto her father as the light of his eyes, and that many young men, strong and goodly to see, looked upon her with favor and sought her to wife. But of all these she would have none, disdaining even to hear them speak, and saying only that her life and service were her father's wholly, and she desired the love and companionship of no man but him. When he was at home, she never left his side; tempting his appetite with dainty dishes when he was exhausted and in need of food, serving him with her own hands at table, and bringing herself the fresh water

for his ablutions; after which she would bend her head for his blessing, and then lift up her face with a smile of radiance, good to cheer a weary man. If it was his will to stay at home and rest him from his strenuous exercises of arms, she would sit beside him, and draw his great head down upon her lap, and with her little milk-white fingers ruffle or smooth the thick masses of his curly hair and magnificent beard until she coaxed him to sleep.

"What love do I want more than his?" she would ask herself. "Why should I leave him desolate, to take up my life with another, who must ever be as a stranger to me compared to him who hath been my companion and my friend my whole life through? And where is another like unto him? In all the land there is not one who, beside him, seems not base and small."

And when Jephthah would wake from sleep, she would clasp and cling to him, and beg him that they never should be parted.

"Nay, my daughter," he would answer; "it must not be that thou sacrificeth thy young life for me for whom pleasure is over. I would have thee wedded to a good man, who will cherish thee; and in seeing thee happy, and having thy children on my knee, I shall know the best joy that is left for me."

Then Namarah would weep, and implore him not to send her from him, saying that what he pictured as her happiness looked to her like the very face of death, so greatly did she dread it. Whereat her father Jephthah would but smile, and say it would not be so with her one day, when the lord and master of her heart should come.

"He is here," she would say, flinging her white arms about him, "there will be never any other." And Jephthah would smile again and say only the one word: "Wait," whereat Namarah would grow almost angry, and tears of vexation would spring into her eyes. Then would Jephthah rouse himself and stand upright on his strong legs, and lift her in his mighty arms, as though she were still the little maid he used to toss and dandle, and hold her high above his head, and refuse to let her down from this unseemly altitude until the break of her childish laughter had blown away her tears.

It happened one fair morning, when earth and air and sky seemed all to meet in a blessed promise of tranquillity and peace, that Namarah stood in the midst of her garden, with a small basket on her arm, from which she was scattering grain to a flock of white doves, which, fluttering from far and near, came to her feet and sank down there, a moving mass of snowy plumage, from which her slender figure, clad in spotless white, rose up like a human emanation from their pure loveliness of hue and outline. Her face and throat and hands were pure white, too, and a look of deep serenity was upon her. The sky above seemed not more still and placid.

She raised her hand and put a few grains of the food into her mouth, and at the motion some of the doves were frightened and flew up, with a whirring noise, only to circle round and come back again and

fall to nodding and dipping about for the grain at her feet. Presently one of the flock flew up and alighted on her shoulder, then another and another. Namarah opened her red lips and showed the dark grains held tight between her little white teeth; at which a pecking and fluttering began among the three tame doves, as she would offer her mouth first to one and then another. It was evidently a familiar game which all the participants enjoyed.

Suddenly, there was a great whirring and fluttering, and the whole flock flew wildly off, and were out of sight behind the trees, before Namarah, left quite alone, perceived the cause of their fright. A young man, taller even than Jephthah, her father, but with the ruddiness of youth and dawning manhood upon his beardless face, stood before her, all in shining armor, on which the moving light danced and glinted. He had taken off his helmet, and sunlight kissed sunlight in the gold of his thick curls. And, behold, when Namarah turned and looked at him, a strange thing came to pass. Her white cheeks, which no one had ever seen other than calm and colorless, were all at once suffused with pink, as if a rose had been suddenly placed beneath a piece of fair white cambric; and in that moment she became a hundred times more beautiful than she had ever been before. The young man colored, too, and bent his golden head, as he said:

"If this be the maiden, Namarah, thy father Jephthah hath sent me to ask of thee some pieces of his armor that he hath need of."

"Is he going into a fight?" the maiden asked, the rose disappearing from her cheeks. "Will he not see me, to say farewell?"

"There is, in truth, some danger of a fight," the young man answered, "for the times are troublous, and a mighty man like Jephthah must be ever ready; but his name is great and terrible, and in going forth to put down the enemy that hath so suddenly arisen, I think the report that thy father Jephthah leadeth the host will be enough, and that there will be no bloodshed. But, maiden," he added, more gently, seeing that her face looked still affrighted, "I pray thee have no fear for the safety of thy father. I will even guard his body with my own." And, as he spoke, he looked on her and loved her.

Namarah met the look, and the trouble of her face grew deeper. She felt the disturbing power of that quiet gaze, but all her thought was for her father.

"Maiden," the young man murmured, in a voice that had a softened cadence, "already, even to-day, there hath been a surprise attack, and your father hath been in danger; but it pleased God that I should be near him, to protect him, as I could, and for this cause Jephthah, thy father, hath chosen me to be his armor-bearer, so that in future my place will be beside him; and I say but the truth when I tell thee that I will protect his life with mine own."

"But, truly," said Namarah, "thou art very noble, and life to thee is even also dear."

"Life would be dear to me no longer, maiden,"

he made answer, "if I should look upon thy face to tell thee that I lived and Jephthah, thy father, was slain."

This time, when he spake the words "thy father," it seemed unto the maiden that his voice dwelt upon them by the space of half a second. The idea glanced through her agitated mind like lightning, but afterward she bethought her of it. But now the young man spake again, and reminded her of his errand.

"My lord Jephthah hath sent thee his blessing through me," he said, "and he prays thee to be of good cheer, and to dread no danger for him."

"I cannot choose but dread," the maiden answered, as she walked beside him to the house, and led the way to where her father's armor lay.

"Nay, but surely," said the young man, full humbly, "thou wilt be a little comforted because of the promise I have given thee?"

"Ay," said Namarah, "it doth comfort me much, and I thank thee from my very heart; but the thought of battle ever makes me tremble, although I am a soldier's child. I pray thee, give my loving greeting to my father, and tell him I go at once to pray the God of Israel for his safety."

"Maiden, I also would be thought of in thy prayers," the young man said, half doubtingly; and she answered:

"I will pray for thee also, soldier. Tell me thy

And he said:

"My name is Adina."

Then once more he looked at her, and again his strange look troubled her; and as she stood and watched the goodly figure in its shining armor down the streets of Mizpeh, a wonder got hold upon her that for the first time at the thought of battle her fears were not wholly for her father.

Long time she knelt and prayed, her maidens waiting without: and all her struggle was to recover the lost feeling that her father was her all in all but another image rose up, over and over again, and would not be forgotten. At last she gave it up, and murmured, half aloud:

"Bless him, even the young man Adina, also, O my God; and bring them back in safety together."

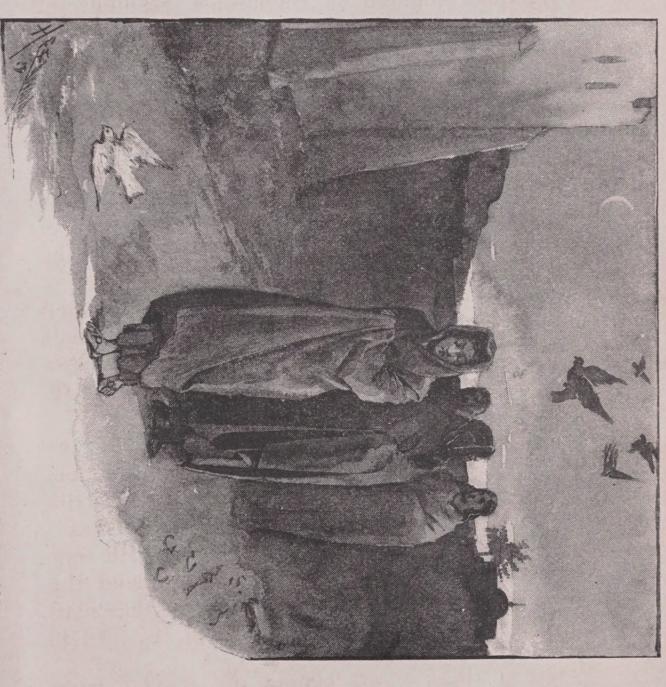
Before the close of day, the streets of Mizpeh rang to the gladdening sound of the victorious return of troops from battle. Namarah, high up in her chamber, watched them with breathless delight, as she saw the body of soldiers coming down the street, and soon she was able to make out the majestic figure of her father, at their head. She was full sure of that, but still, she bent from her window eagerly, and strained her vision to see more. Suddenly, her breath was drawn in pantingly, and once more the rose was on her cheek. Behind her father she had recognized the tall figure of Adina, and her eyes continually strayed from one to the other, as the setting sun burnished the curls of his golden hair as the young man rode his splendid horse adown the streets of Mizpeh.

She knelt behind the curtain of her window as the troop came near, escorting their leader to his home, but her father knew this little way of hers, and sent a glad glance upward as he dismounted. Adina saw and understood the look, and quick as thought, glanced upward, too; but while the look of Jephthah lingered on Namarah's casement, the look of the young man was hastily withdrawn, and even in the golden flush of the sunset the hue of his cheek deepened. Namarah saw that it did, and the consciousness suddenly reminded her that she was thinking of some one else beside her father, at the moment of his return from battle, and that was a thing that had never happened before. She rose to her feet and flew down the stairs to meet Jephthah at the entrance to his chamber, as the body of soldiers passed onward down the street.

Into his arms she sprang, her soft flesh crushed against the metal of his armor, and her hands clasped tight about his neck; nor would she loose her hold when he had kissed and fondled her repeatedly.

"Dost thou love thy old father so indeed?" he asked. "And art thou trembling? Why, maiden, thou art a soldier's child, and battles are his daily work. Wilt thou never lose thy timorousness? Thou lovest thy old father too much, my little one. Thou shouldst have some one else to spend thy woman's heart upon. I would fain see thee married, with a husband and children of thy own to love."

"But at these words, behold the maiden burst into great sobs, and clung to his neck weeping, and declaring earnestly that she wanted no husband—



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she wanted no love that would separate her from her father.

Then did Jephthah soothe and caress her full tenderly, until the smiles had scattered the tears, and she took his armor from him, as was her custom, and led him to his favorite seat, that he might rest.

As she stood holding the great breast-plate in her little hands, she said suddenly:

"Am not I as good an armor-bearer as the tall young man thou sentest here this morning?" Whereat she laughed softly and blushed again.

"That art thou," answered Jephthah, fondly. "No one could perform the office better than thou dost do it. But what thoughtest thou of the young man Adina?"

"He seemeth to be a soldier-like young man enough," Namarah answered, carelessly, and fell to polishing with a fold of her white gown the shield she was holding.

"Thou carest as little for him, I see, as for the others of his kind; but, Namarah, see that thou ever treatest him kindly when he cometh in thy way. But for his courage in the sudden attack this morning, thy father might be with thee now dead instead of living."

As he told the story of the young man's bravery and self-devotion, Namarah's eyes grew brilliant, and her breath came thick and fast; and as Jephthah dwelt upon the imminent danger that had threatened both, a look so terrified came into her face that he said again, as he had said so often:

"Thou lovest thy old father too much."

It often happened, after this, that the young man Adina would come to the house in company with Jephthah, or by his ordering or permission, and make his way to the great room where were kept all manner of pieces of armor and weapons, and other trappings of war. And at times it transpired that, as he approached the house, Namarah would be in the garden, feeding her doves. Sometimes he would pass on with only a gracious reverence to her, but again he would wax bolder and come near, laughing with her to see the white birds scatter at his approach, and then, as he would stand very still by Namarah's side, settle back contentedly at her feet and go on with their breakfast. He delighted to see her feed them from her mouth; and they soon grew so accustomed to him that they would fly to her without heeding him, sometimes perching for a moment on his shoulders, and hopping thence to hers.

"They are carrier-birds," she said one morning, as he stood beside her thus. She looked up in his face and smiled, but quickly her eyes dropped to the doves at her feet.

"Hast thou tested them?" he asked. "And will they, indeed, bear tidings to thee from afar?"

"Truly, I cannot tell thee of mine own knowledge," she made answer; "but I know it is their nature, and I feel assured that if one of my birds should be taken far away it would return to me."

"Maiden, I well believe it," he replied. And at these words, so gently spoken, lo, there came into her cheeks again that treacherous rose-color which he alone, or the mention of him, had power to summon there.

"Dost thou believe it?" she made answer. "Then, truly, thou mayst test it some day. When next thou goest on a journey, thou mayst take one of my white doves with thee, and we shall see whether or not it will return."

"So be it, maiden," he replied. "There is even now a message I would fain send thee by it, had I the courage."

And as he spoke he turned and left her, before the wonderment his words had roused found voice in speech.

"What message?" she murmured again and again, speaking in hushed silence to her own heart, as she wandered alone about the garden, or sat with her maidens at her embroidery. They were engaged upon the task of working a rich vestment for the high-priest, and no one had so fine an eye for the blending of colors, nor such deft fingers in handling the brilliant silk and golden threads with which they wrought, as Namarah. But as she sat at work to-day her mind and senses were preoccupied, so that the silks got tangled in her fingers, and the colors were mismatched in a clumsy manner that none had ever seen in Namarah before.

That evening, when her father Jephthah came home, there was a look upon his face that made Namarah anxious. When their evening meal was ended, he called the maiden to him, and fondling her with more than his usual lovingness, he revealed to her the care he had upon his mind.

"I have not told thee of it, child," he said, "because that I refrained to cause thee uneasiness until the time were come; but of late there hath been great trouble and strife in the land of Israel, and the children of Ammon have made war against it. And in consequence of this a strange thing hath happened unto me, for, behold, the elders of Gilead have come to fetch me out of the land of Tob that I may be their captain to fight against the children of Ammon. But I spake unto them and said: 'Did ye not hate me and expel me out of my father's house, and why are ye come unto me now when ye are in distress?' And the elders of Israel said unto me: 'Therefore we turn again unto thee now, that thou mayst go with us and fight against the children of Ammon, and be our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.' Then said I unto the elders of Gilead: 'If ye bring me home again to fight against the children of Ammon, and the Lord delivers them before me, shall I be your head?' And behold they answered: 'The Lord be witness between us, if we do not according to thy words."

Now, as he spake, the maiden Namarah had felt her heart within her smitten with a great and mighty fear.

"Go not, my father," she pleaded, hanging about his neck and hiding her face against him. "Did not the elders of Gilead thrust thee out and disown thee? Why goest thou then to fight against their enemies?" But Jephthah answered and said:

"These be the enemies of the Lord, my daughter, who have lifted up their hands against His people Israel, and I must even go forth to meet them, strong in the power of His might."

But Namarah only wept and clung to him, and

said:

"Let my words find favor with thee, O my father, and go not forth to battle, lest thou lose thy life, and I be left alone and comfortless."

"I would fain have thee take my tidings more submissively, my little one," made answer Jephthah, as he stroked the masses of her unbound hair. "Thy father is a soldier, and thou art a soldier's child; and I would have thee gird my armor on, and wish me Godspeed against the enemies of the Lord and His people, trusting in His power to bring me back, triumphant and victorious, into thy arms again."

But Namarah seemed to get no comfort from his words, and answered only:

"Do not leave me. Thou art all I have."

"My child, my little child," said Jephthah, with a mighty sweetness in his voice, "it often grieves thy father's heart that it is even so. Thou never knewest a mother's care and love, and though, Godknoweth, I have tried to let thee feel no lack of tenderness, yet often it doth trouble me that thou hast on the earth no binding tie of love save this to me; and it would even fill my soul with comfort to see thee wed to one who might worthily cherish thy youth and protect thy tenderness." But Namarah, with her face still hid against him, only shook her head, as if in strong opposition to his words.

"Child, bethink thee," Jephthah said, when he had gently kissed and stroked her head in silence for a moment, "it must never be for thee to die unwed, for who knows but the will and purpose of the great God may be that thou shalt be chosen among women to be the mother of thy people's deliverer? It hath even seemed to me that in the eyes of the Almighty thy meekness and pureness and humility may have found such grace, that this great honor, wherewith one woman is to be honored above all others, may come to rest upon thee. Forget not this, my daughter, and order thy mind to become a true and loving wife, as thou hast been to me a true and loving daughter. Whether this glory above all glories may be destined for thee or not, grieve not thy father's heart by refusing to be wed, so that he may see thee with thy children about thee, before he dieth and sleepeth with his fathers."

Namarah made no answer, but her fluttering breaths grew calm, and though she spake no word to signify her acquiescence in his desires, yet neither did she gainsay him any more, a thing whereat her father marveled. However, he spake not the thought that was in his mind, but was thankful in the silence of his heart.

After these weak and faint-hearted words, the brave spirit of the girl came into her again, and she went about her household duties, and particularly the preparations for her father's going forth to war,

with a courage even greater than her wont. Her father she loaded more and more with endearments and caresses, but she ever avoided speech about his coming dangers in the field, except that once she said to him suddenly, and with her head bent low over her work:

"Will it be that thou takest with thee thine armor-bearer—the young man, Adina?"

And Jephthah answered:

"Ay."

"Then," said she, with her head still bent, "it is well done, for truly he hath said to me that he would shield thy body with his own. But go not into danger, my father. Be careful of his life and of thine own."

"Thou speakest unwisely, maiden, and not as a soldier's daughter. Thou knowest that in battle a brave man must not shun the place of danger, but if he trusteth in the Lord, no harm can hurt him. Adina also is a man that feareth God, and therefore will we trust to be delivered and brought home in safety."

"Amen!" the maiden said, full reverently, and bent her head more lowly yet, as one who prayeth.

The full moon rose o'er Jephthah's garden on the eve of his going forth to battle, and Jephthah's daughter stood alone and held her heart to listen. Her white robe fluttered in the cool air of evening and clung about her slender limbs; and standing there, her pale face settled into mute repose, she looked like a fair white statue, clad in wind-blown raiment. No sound disturbed the stillness of the

night, except the cooing of the doves in their house close by. But, after long waiting, there mingled with this the tread of approaching footsteps. The folds of her white gown trembled on her breast, as if the heart beneath them fluttered. Nearer came the footsteps through the trees, beneath the overhanging vines, until the moonlight revealed the tall form and noble features of the young man Adina.

"Is it thou, O maiden?" he asked softly, stopping a few paces from her. "The God of Israel bless thee that thou heardest my prayer, and hast let me speak to thee, before I go to battle. Hast thou no thought, Namarah, of the words that I have come to speak?"

The doves cooed and gabbled with their little muttering sounds, but Namarah answered not. They stood a pace or two apart—the maiden Namarah and the young man Adina—but still the silence was unbroken.

"Hast thou even brought me here to break my heart, Namarah?" the young man said. "I love thee maiden and unless thou'lt love me in return, the God of Israel grant that I may fall in battle, for my life is naught to me without thee."

But Namarah raised her hands and hid her face from sight, and Adina's voice began to tremble as he spake to her again, and said, full tenderly:

"Didst thou not know, Namarah, when I told thee I would send thee a message by thy bird, but that I lacked the courage, that that message was my love for thee? As God beholds me, maiden, my heart hath even been knit to thine since first my eyes fell on thee; and if thou love me not, my life is over for me."

Still was silent the maiden Namarah, so that Adina's heart grew cold with fear within him, and his voice brake as he spake once more:

"I go forth to battle, O maiden, to fight against the enemies of the Lord and to shield thy father. It may even be that death awaits me, and if thou hast in thy heart aught of tenderness toward me, I pray thee speak, or let me go to death and silence and forgetfulness."

Then did Namarah turn to him, a sudden trembling passing over her whole body, and dropping her hands from before her face, she stretched them out toward him. Whereat Adina fell upon his knees and bowed his head, thinking it was her will to bestow her blessing upon him in token of eternal farewell. But with a swift and silent motion, Namarah was at his side, and before he could lift his bended head, her soft arms clung around his neck.

"Maiden," he muttered, in a voice deep with passion, while he reached upward his strong arms, and held her in a close and gentle clasp, though he rose not from his lowly posture, "tell me, I pray thee, what thou meanest. Is it for pity thou dost clasp me? If so—"

But Namarah bent her head above him, and made answer:

"No, not pity-love."

Then did he spring to his feet, and stand erect in all the comely beauty of his goodly youth, and

drawing her close against his breast, he bent his head and kissed her. It was to Namarah the first time she had ever felt her heart respond to any sign of love, and Adina's heart was even as virgin as her own. It was this in the heart of each that made that moment's rapture. It was a long, long time that neither spake. Their arms were folded close about each other, and once and again their lips met and clung to those sweet and sacred kisses which are the precious fruit of purity of life. Then spake the young man Adina:

"Wilt thou have me tell thy father, Namarah, that we may have his blessing on our betrothal?for I think he will not turn him from me, seeing he hath but lately told me that he oweth unto me his life."

But Namarah answered:

"Nay, I would have him go forth to the fight, as hath been his wont of yore, believing himself my only object of care and love and prayer. He hath told me that he wills that I shall marry, and when thou comest back with him victorious, then will I tell him all, and ask his blessing. But, ah, Adina, my most loved one, my new-found joy and hope, how if the enemies of the Lord should slay thee, that thou returnest to me no more!"

And at these words she fell to weeping, and sobbed upon his breast. But Adina comforted her strongly, and bade her pray to God with faith, telling her he felt within himself that God would prosper the army of her father Jephthah, and bring them back victorious.

"Then will I claim thee for my bride, Namarah, thou fairest of women and maidens, and joy will be ours as long as life shall last."

Namarah clasped him closer yet, and turned her face upward to receive his kiss; and behold, as his lips rested upon hers, they heard the doves near by cooing and calling.

"Thou shalt give me one of thy birds, Namarah," Adina said; "and I will make for it a little cage, and carry it with me; and when the enemies of the Lord shall have been vanquished, then will I send thee the tidings on the wings of thy bird."

And the idea pleased Namarah, and side by side they went together to where the doves slept, and Namarah opened the door and called them to her with the little call they knew so well; and, although the time was late and strange, they circled round her head, and one of them settled on her shoulder. Namarah took it gently in her hand, and ere she gave it over to Adina she kissed the crest of its snow-white head.

"Come back to me in peace and triumph," she said.

And then, when Adina had taken the dove from her, she realized that the moment of parting was come, and, with a great wave of love and tenderness and longing sweeping over her, she gave her self into her lover's arms to receive his last embrace.

Solemn and sweet and silent it was, there in the holy moonlight; and when at last she raised her head to speak, there were brave words on her lips.

"Thou knowest the meaning of our city's name," she said. "Take it for an omen to comfort thee and rest thy heart, and I will even rest so on it, too."

"Yea, I know it," he answered; then kissed he her once more, and murmuring the word "Mizpeh!" between his half-parted lips, he turned and left her alone.





CHAPTER II.

It was many a weary day that Namarah waited for tidings which came not. It was her habit to sit at work with her maidens upon the roof, or else high up in the top chamber of the house, and always she would place herself near to the window which looked toward the field of battle, and none knew why it was that she strained her eyes so wistfully into the air, as if she looked for and expected some token in the heavens. Often her work would fall from her fingers, and she would rest a long time idle, with no sound escaping her, except the deep-drawn sighs which none knew how to interpret. The maidens that were her companions looked on at this, and marveled. They knew that Namarah was ever a loving and solicitous daughter, but it was not uncommon for her father to be away and in danger, and this was something more than her usual concern for him. She had lost heart in her work, also, and cared no longer for the amusements and pastimes with which it had formerly been her wont to occupy herself. But, in spite of this, her interest was more tender than ever before

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in those who were sick or in trouble, and she spent much time in prayer.

Her chief amusement and diversion during this time were her doves, and sometimes, after feeding them, she would-place herself on the garden seat, and let them climb and flutter all about her, and take their food from her mouth and fingers, and even from the meshes of her hair. She had told to no one the secret of her heart, and these silent witnesses of her meetings with Adina seemed now the nearest thing to him that there remained to her.

At length, one morning, when Namarah had grown paler than her wont, with long waiting and watching, she stood at the casement of her chamber, and her listless gaze that had been long fixed wearily upon the distant scene, became in a moment alert and animated. Far up in the blue she had seen a flying bird, and at that sight her heart within her always trembled. Perhaps it was a skylark, or even one of her own pets, wandered farther than its custom away from home. Yes, it was a dove-a snow-white carrier—and surely, one of her own, as there was none like them in that region. She had never known one of hers to fly so high as that be fore, and the throbbing of her heart grew violent, as she looked up and so it pausing and circling above her head. Surely she caught sight of a tiny object, not a feather, between its wing and breast, as the bird swooped downward and flew into the pigeon-house.

With limbs that shook with hope and fear, Namarah stole softly through the silent halls and

chambers, down the garden-path and into the place where all her birds were together. They were cooing and muttering and gabbling as if something out of the common had happened to them, and when she paused in the doorway and called, they all came fluttering to her. One by one she touched them with her hands and felt beneath their wings. They were too exactly each like each to distinguish among them, but all of them came tamely to her call, it being her habit to stroke and smooth them as she would. Just as her heart began to sink with disappointment, she noticed one with broken feathers, and her fingers touched something smooth and hard, and lo, there was, indeed, the thing she sought—a tightly folded paper, tied with a small cord under the bird's wing. Her hands trembled as she loosed it, and she hid it hurriedly in her bosom. Then she ran swiftly through the gardenpaths, and back to her own room, where she shut herself in, and taking out the precious paper, pressed it to her lips and then fell upon her knees in prayer. She entreated God most earnestly that the tidings might be good; her heart swelled with praises to His holy name, and her faith was strong in the answer to her prayers, as she opened the paper and read. These were the words:

"MOST DEAR MAIDEN: It hath pleased the God of Israel to send the hosts of Jephthah, thy father, a complete and mighty victory, and we be, even now, upon our way to thee, returning in triumph and great thankfulness of heart. Thou will greet me as thy chosen and sanctioned husband, Namarah, for thy father hath so commended my bearing in the fight, wherein I was able

to render him good service, that he hath promised me that I shall choose my own reward, and I have chosen even the maiden Namarah to be my wife. I have even so spoken to thy father, feeling sure that at that moment he would not say me nay, and he hath even given me his blessing, and avowed that I have found favor in his eyes. Thy white bird will bear to thee those tidings, and before set of sun we shall be with thee. God grant to me, O maiden, that thy heart may reach forth to mine with the same love wherewith I feel mine reach to thee, as I write these lines, to be held in thy dear hands beneath thy dear eyes. "Thy ADINA."

Now, as the maiden Namarah read these words, there rose within her so great a rapture that her very face did glow and become radiant with joy. For until her eyes had rested on the young man Adina, she had known not what it was to feel the mighty love wherewith a tender virgin loveth, with her soul and heart at once, the youth whose nobleness and virtue command her worship and devotion, and the exceeding joy of this moment wrapped her soul in a great wave of ecstasy, that make the shining of her eyes like unto the light of stars. To feel that Adina loved her, he who was unto her eyes the very prince of men, and that her well-beloved father looked with favor on their union was a bliss so great, that almost she felt as if her heart within her must burst for very joy. As she sat in her chamber alone, and read again and yet again the precious message that the bird had brought, such visions as ever fill the minds of maidens when love is come in truth passed like pictures before her. She saw herself meeting with Adina without the need of concealment, and she felt again those arms about

her and those kisses on her lips, at the mere memory of which she thrilled. She saw the calm delight upon her beloved father's face, as he blessed her union with Adina, and gazing further yet into the future, she saw herself the happy wife and mother, with a wondrous babe to lay into her father's arms, a babe who might perhaps be the one that was to make her first and most glorious among women.

Already she felt herself the happiest and the proudest, and the God who had created in her breast this miracle of joy might deign perhaps to give her the supreme glory for which all the maidens of Israel looked, and in view of which they strove to keep them pure and true and holy unto the Lord.

Now when the sun began to sink toward the West, Namarah called to her maidens, and arrayed herself in garments richly wrought and beautiful, as one that keepeth a great feast. Her robe was all of white, embroidered with gold, and the encrusted folds fell heavily about the splendid curves of her most noble figure. In her loosened hair were twisted chains of gold that wrapped it in and out, and made a light and darkness beautiful to see. About her shoulders, which her robe left bare, she wrapped a scarf of golden tissue, through which her gleaming neck and arms shone fair as moonlight seen through sunbeams.

And when the maidens and all the household of Jephthah wondered to see her so adorned, she spake, and said unto them:

"I go to meet my father Jephthah and his host returning from victory."

And when they asked her:

"How knowest thou that he hath won the day, and is returning?"

She made answer, as the saying was:

"A little bird hath told me."

And they knew not how true indeed were the words she spake.

And as the sun sank lower and it began to draw toward evening, behold, there fell upon the ears of Namarah and her maidens the distant sound of tramping horses and anon the notes of a trumpet.

"They be notes of victory, even as thou hast said," spake one of the maidens, while Namarah stood and listened, breathless and half troubled, like an image of too perfect joy. And Namarah said:

"I will even go forth to meet them."

Whereat her maidens wondered, for it was her custom to await her father within the house, a feeling of timidity ever preventing her from appearing before the eyes of the soldiers. But now there showed in all her bearing a very noble pride, so that she looked no longer a shy and trembling maiden, but a woman and the daughter of a conqueror. There was a most rich hue of roses on her cheeks, and her great eyes blazed and sparkled, so that Namarah looked that day a being of such glorious beauty as none who looked on her had ever seen before.

Now, as the host of Jephthah marched down the

streets of Mizpeh, while all along the people cheered and shouted as they passed, behold at Jephthah's side, in front of them, there rode the young man Adina, and not behind, as was his wont. And by this token all the people knew that he had won glory for himself in battle, and that Jephthah strove thus to show the favor which he had toward him, and with the noise of their shoutings, "Long live Jephthah, the Gileadite!" were mingled cries of "Long live Adina!"

And as these sounds came even to the ears of Namarah, behold the flush upon her cheeks grew deeper and her eyes yet more glorious. And ever the soldiery pressed onward, followed by the shouts of triumph from the crowd. And Jephthah, the mighty captain, rode a night-black charger, while that of Adina was white as milk. Both men were clad in gleaming armor, on which the rays of the setting sun made blazes of vivid fire, gilding the silver of the old man's beard, and burnishing the gold of Adina's thick curls, which seemed a part of his shining helmet. And ever, as they rode, the eyes of both were turned toward the house of Jephthah, for Jephthah had vowed a vow unto the Lord, and had said: "If Thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into my hands, then it shall be that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering." And he looked to see what it should be.

But the young man Adina, who knew not of Jeph-

thah's vow, and had said naught of the tidings sent to Namarah by the carrier-bird—that being a secret between the maiden and himself—knew that Namarah would be prepared for their coming, and rightly thought that she would come to meet them.

And now, as they began to come nigh to the house, behold, the great doors were thrown open, and forth there came the maiden Namarah, clad all in white and gold, and after her her maidens, with timbrels and dances. But Namarah came first, with her head erect and all her face made glorious with joy. The childish timidity she was wont to show had vanished now, and she faced the band of soldiery a royal princess in her bearing. She felt herself a queen, indeed, for happy love had crowned her.

And as she came, behold the two men who were at the head of the great host drew rein and suddenly checked their horses, and all the soldiery halted. All eyes were on the beauteous face of the majestic maiden, hers only seeing the two faces of the men who led the host.

Her gaze sought first the face of Adina, with a treacherous fealty which she could not control, and as their looks met thus, behold the joyousness of his heart gleamed forth into his eyes, which met hers, with a look that thrilled her soul with rapture. For a moment she was blinded with ecstasy, and saw naught before her but light, supreme, bewildering; and then, with the reflection of that light upon her face, she turned her raptured gaze upon her father, and suddenly the great light became a great dark-

ness, which likewise cast its reflection upon her; for the face of Jephthah her father was as the face of a man in mortal throes, and behold the hand that held the bridle shook and fell, and his body swerved in the saddle, so that he would have fallen but that the young man Adina, seeing the maiden's sudden change of countenance had looked toward its source, and was just in time to put out his hand and stay

Jephthah in his place.

Then Adina dismounted and ran to Jephtha 's side, and while the maiden Namarah herself laid hold on the bridle of his horse, the young man assisted him to the ground, and with Namarah's help led him into the house. The eyes which had but lately looked such joy into each other, exchanged now looks of pain and horror, for it was quickly passed from mouth to mouth that the great captain had been seized with mortal illness, and that the joy of his victorious return and meeting with his daughter was like to cost him his life.

But Jephthah, when he heard these words, denied

and said:

"It is not as ye say, O men of Israel; nevertheless the hand of the Lord is heavy upon me this day. Cause to go out from me all save the maiden Namarah and the young man Adina."

And when they had so done, behold Jephthah

rent his clothes, and said:

"Alas! my daughter; thou hast brought me very low; and thou art one of them that trouble me; for I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back !"

And Namarah said unto him:

"My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; forasmuch as the Lord hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, even the children of Ammon."

So spake she, and her voice was firm and clear, but her face went deadly pale, even as the face of the young man Adina put on a ghastly pallor; and as he stood before her in his shining armor a great trembling seized him, so that his armor shook and sounded. And as she looked on him and saw his grief, behold her heart bled for him, and for all the visions of her happy love; and she turned to him and threw her arms about his neck. And Adina clasped her to him, careful not to hurt her tender body against his mail-clad breast, and it seemed unto them both that the barrier that had come so suddenly between their two souls was even as this barrier between their bodies-hard and cruel and impassable. But there was no barrier between their lips, and as they softly touched and trembled on each other, they knew not whether that moment's ecstasy was of pain or joy.

And Jephthah sat and gazed on them, and as he looked he was no longer the mighty man of valor, but a creature sore stricken, so that his hands shook for very weakness, and feeble and impotent tears fell down upon his beard and trickled to his armor, while his face was changed and piteous to behold, and he looked, all at once, an aged man.

Turning her eyes toward him, and seeing him in

such unhappy case, Namarah slipped from her lover's arms, and went and knelt beside her father, circling his neck with her tender arms, and calling him all manner of caressing names, while she kissed him with deep lovingness on his forehead, his cheeks and his lips. Then did she loosen his heavy armor, and remove each piece in turn, beseeching him to take comfort, and avowing toward him an affection more fervent and dutiful than even she had shown him in the past. But Adina spake no word either with or against her, but stood where she had left him, with his right hand holding the elbow of his left arm, which was raised toward his face, his chin sunk in his palm. He was still in complete armor, only he had removed his helmet, so that his sunny curls were uncovered. Right goodly to look upon he was, in the majesty of his stalwart youth, but his ruddy skin was ashen white, and in the great blue eyes, which had so lately glowed with so luminous a love-light, there was now the shadow of great despair. And ever his eyes were fixed upon the maiden, following each movement that she made, and the hunger of his soul was in them.

When Jephthah, at her bidding stood up, that Namarah might lift from him the weight of his heavy armor, he turned and looked upon Adina, and a great cry brake from him, and he sank backward into his seat and covered his face with his hands. But Namarah bent above him and drew away his hands, kneeling on her knees before him, and holding them in both her own.

"Nay, grieve thee not, my father," she said, tenderly. "Let it be done to me according as thou hast vowed unto the Lord. Hath he not given thee to me, and me to thee, and can He not have back His own? His favor hath been graciously bestowed upon us on every side, seeing that He hath even given me my very heart's desires in all things wherein I have desired. Be comforted, my father. I have rendered unto Him nothing for all His gifts to me; and if my life be vowed to Him, I give Him but His own."

"Thy life is mine, and vowed to me!" burst forth Adina, hotly, taking a step toward her, as if he would wrest her from her father. But the compelling eyes of the maiden Namarah arrested him, and he turned, and began to pace the apartment with the angry strides of a caged beast.

"Ah, woe, my daughter," Jephthah spake, "that thy father, who hath so loved thee, should bring thee now such hurt. It had pleased me well that thou shouldest wed Adina and bear him sons and daughters, and it had even rejoiced my soul to think that perhaps of thy pure body should be born the deliverer of thy people Israel. It was but the morning of this day on which I dreamed these dreams, and to what are they come? Alas, my daughter, why camest thou forth to meet me, so contrary to thy wont and usage? Thou wast ever affrighted before the soldiery and held backward when they came about the door."

"I was even bold and fearless, my father, against my usual wont, because that love had made me so, and in the presence of my lord, Adina, I had but one fear only, lest I might fail of my honor to him—who knew not my ways as thou knewest them—and appear unloving and ungracious in his eyes.

At these words Adina's motions grew more gentle and he checked him in his walk, and came and stood near by, his chin sunk in his palm, as before, and his eyes, with a most mighty tenderness in them, bent upon Namarah.

"But, how knewest thou, my daughter, that the victory was won and thy father's host returning, seeing I sent no messenger before me, but made haste myself to bring thee tidings?"

Then Namarah turned her fair face upward, and said:

"Adina, speak. Let it be known unto Jephthah, my father, that the thing that is come upon us was partly of our own doing—thine and mine."

Then Adina, softened, mayhap, by the sight of the old man's suffering, and more yet by the nobleness and submission of Namarah's spirit, answered, and said:

"These words be true, O Jephthah, for it was even I that sent unto the maiden tidings, by which she gained the knowledge of our approach."

"But how sentedst thou these tidings," said Jephthah, "seeing that I gave thee no leave to take a messenger?"

"Therein the fault was mine," Namarah said, "if fault there be—for, were it not the will of God, naught that was done or is to be were possible—seeing that I gave unto Adina one of my carrier-

birds, to send me word of thy triumph and return, and the bird, in truth, brought me the tidings this morning. Seest thou not then therefore, oh, my father, that this thing that is befallen us was to be? Surely there is a God that ruleth over all the earth, and shall He not do right? Let us but be true to what we owe to Him-thou and I and Adina-and be sure that no harm shall come to us. Faithful is He that hath promised, and He will deliver us."

Then Jephthah bowed his head upon his hands

and uttered a mighty groan.

"How sayest thou, my daughter, that we shall be delivered? Knowest thou not that according to my vow thou must be offered a burnt sacrifice?"

As he spake these awful words, the maiden's face grew whiter still, though the courage of her eyes faltered not, and through all the body of the young man Adina there ran a great shiver that again made to shake his armor that it rattled and sounded, seeing which, Namarah rose and ran to him, fearing lest he might even fall to the ground, so greatly he tottered and trembled. Taking him by the hand, she led him to a place beside her father and gently pressed him to a seat, while she herself sank back upon her knees before them, holding a hand of each, and as she lifted up her head and looked at them, it seemed unto the father and the lover both that her face was as the face of an angel.

"Hearken to me, O thou to whom my soul best loveth," said Namarah, "for there is a voice within me that seemeth to me to speak for God Himself, and that most dread and sacred voice saith to me

what it shall comfort thee to hear. 'I will deliver thee,' the voice crieth continually, and shall we not believe this Heavenly voice? It may be that deliverance, as thou dost think of it, is not to be, and that God will even require of thee, oh my father, the strict fulfillment of thy vow, but He hath ways we know not of, and is He not the God that heareth prayer? Let us therefore be comforted, and take courage and pray unto Him continually for deliverance from the terror wherewith we are affrighted. For what is it that thy soul feareth O Adina, and O Jephthah my father? Is it not even the thought of parting? Surely, the most High God liveth forever, eternal in the Heavens, and surely our love is of God, and therefore cannot die; the love wherewith my soul is knit to thine, my father, and to thine Adina, the husband of my choice. Though I saw the altar made ready before my very eyes, and though I felt the flames of its fires about me, yet would I falter not; for God, from whom I spared not to deliver my body to be burned, will surely redeem my spirit—a thing imperishable as Himself; and neither will He withhold from me the desire of my soul, seeing that I wish in all things to serve Him with all my soul and mind and strength."

As Namarah spake these words, the spirits of the men who listened to her grew suddenly more calm, and the faith and courage with which her own heart was animated seemed to be in some sense imparted to them, so that Jephthah turned unto Adina,

and spake unto him in these words:

"Let not thy soul within thee hate me, O Adina,

for my heart is sad even unto death. Forgive me the harm that I have done unto thee through ignorance, and let it be with us both even according unto the words that this maiden hath spoken, and let us take comfort and have hope that the God of power will indeed deliver us in this our hour of greatest need. Let us together pray continually for the deliverance that she feeleth to be in store for us."

And Adina answered, and said:

"It shall be as thou sayest, O Jephthah, and the God of power hear our prayers."

Then Jephthah caused him that he knelt in front of him, at the side of the maiden Namarah, and as they rested so, Jephthah lifted up his hands, and blessed them there in the name of the God of Israel. And as their heads were bowed together, the short golden curls of the man beside the long, dark tresses of the maiden, Jephthah rose, and softly left them; and when they lifted up their heads, behold they were alone.

Then the face of each turned to each, and long time they gazed into each other's eyes, as though their very souls were bared unto each other. Then silently their arms entwined, and softly their lips met and pressed and clung; and so rested they, still upon their knees, for the moment was sacred at once to love and to death. The thought of what was to come was in the heart of each, and cast around them a great awe that seemed to wrap them in; but even over this their pure love triumphed, and the man and the maiden were shown therein the truth of Namarah's words, that a love that is of

God is stronger than death, and even, also, as undying as God himself.

Then Adina lifted up his voice and prayed this prayer unto the Lord:

"Almighty God, most Holy One, whose nature is love, and whose life is eternal, grant unto us, Thy servants, eternal life in love. Seeing that the love wherewith we love each other is of Thee, let it burn forever, a most pure and holy fire, lighted by Thee on earth, to be a light forever before Thy throne in Heaven. Look into the hearts of these Thy servants, O most sure and searching Eye, and behold and see the love wherewith Thy servant and Thy handmaid love each other, in Thee. Thou knowest that Heaven gave it birth, in the presence of Thy glory, and lent it for a while to earth; but earth, with all its unpureness, hath been harmless to dim the luster of its pure, white flame, so that it shall return to Thee without spot or blemish, or any such thing. Pure fire of God, live ever in our hearts, binding us here below by this bright chain to Heaven above, where all is brightness, in the presence of The Light. And as the love that burns within Thy servant's heart meeteth the love that burns within the heart of Thy handmaid, and these be welded in a sacred kiss, let the bright flame of these united fires rise up to Thee, an emanation from Thy love returned to Thee, who art all love.

"Behold us, O Almighty Love, and bless us, Thy servant and thy handmaid, and in Thy now good time and way cause to compass us around about the arms of Thy mighty deliverance. Amen." And Namarah, in her gentle voice, which the words of Adina's prayer made now to tremble, answered even also, "Amen."

After that they gat them to their feet and went in search of the maiden's father Jephthah, that they might speak unto him cheering words and comfort him with the comfort wherewith their souls within them had been comforted.

And Namarah spoke unto her father Jephthah, and said:

"Let this thing be done for me: let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my fellows."

And he said:

" Go."

And after this, behold, the face of the maiden was no longer sorrowful, but ever there beamed forth from it a most calm and shining light that even comforted the hearts of all who gazed on her. Sometimes it happened that Jephthah, her father and the young man Adina would look anxious and worn with care, but Namarah would bid them then to go and pray to God that their faith fail not, so that they might not miss the reward prepared of God for those who believe and trust Him to the utmost. And even as they prayed their hearts were comforted and their spirits strengthened.

On the evening of the return from battle of the hosts of Jephthah, the Gileadite, Namarah went, as was her wont, to feed her doves, and, as she stood among them, more white than was the gown she wore, there came to her, down the garden-walk,

through the parted branches of the trees, the young man Adina.

Now, Namarah knew that he would come, even at this time and place, but her heart within her trembled, and the color was not so far gone from out her cheek but that his coming called it back, like to a rose in bloom.

Adina, who had rested from his travelling and refreshed himself, was clad this evening, like Namarah, all in white, in a stately robe that swathed his stalwart body from the shoulder to the sandals on his feet. His beautiful strong young arms were hid beneath its folds, until, as he came up to where the maiden stood, he reached them out and folded her tenderly and strongly against his breast.

"Hurt not the bird, Adina," she said, lowly, as he held her there and knew not to distinguish between the fluttering of the dove and the beating of the maiden's heart. "It is even thy little messenger, which did company thee upon thy dangerous wanderings and bring me the message of thy heart to mine."

"How knowest thou it is the same, Namarah," he made answer, "seeing that these snow-white birds of thine are like as be garden-lilies?" And as he spake, he held her still with one strong arm, while the other hand he laid above her little one that gently smoothed the ruffled plumage of the frightened bird.

"I knew it even by its travel-stains and by its broken feathers. See, the birdling hath e'en suffered in our service," and, as she spake, she lifted it and kissed it tenderly, at which Adina swiftly bent his tall head and kissed the very spot whereon her lips had lain upon the bird, saying as he did so:

"Thy kisses are all mine, Namarah, and I must even take back the one that thou hast given to the bird. It was ill done of thee to bestow it on another than him to whom it doth by right belong. Release the bird that hath too long engaged the touches of thy hands, for these be mine also, and to-night I long for all thy love, seeing that my heart within me is like to burst with sorrow."

Then Namarah swiftly loosed the bird, which flew away and vanished from their sight, even as the maiden threw her arms about her lover's neck and yielded herself to his most sweet embrace.

"I pray thee sorrow not, Adina, my beloved." She spake low. "Thine am I for eternity, and Heaven's joys can never end. Wilt thou not strive to give me strength to do the thing that lies before me? Pray to God for courage for both thee and me, for love is sweet, and death seems cruel."

"Ay, death is cruel, cruel!" made answer Adina, while that his brow grew stern, and the very hands that were about her soft young body clinched as if in anger.

"Now, may God forgive me," said Namarah, "for the evil word I spake. It even passed the door of my lips without mine own consent. Our God is good, Adina, and if we dishonor Him not, by doubt of His goodness and rebellion to His will, He will most likely deliver us both; and if it pleaseth Him to take my spirit back to Him who gave it, and so leave thee here upon the earth, will it seem too hard a thing to wait with patience until the hour of thy release from earth and flesh shall come, when thy spirit shall again meet mine?"

"Too hard a thing, Namarah! I could wait till eternity were ended sooner than I could love any other maiden than thee!"

"Ah, sweet, sweet is thy love and loyalty beloved!" saith Namarah; "and my heart is even warmed and comforted to hear thee speak those words. Nevertheless, there is a thing I would have thee remember. If it should be, when I am dead, that thou shouldst ever love another maiden—for thou art young, and there be others worthy of thy love, and life alone is long and sad—I would not have thee live unwed because of me. If thou choosest to marry thou hast my full consent, and even my blessing from Heaven."

But at her words the young man thrust her from him almost roughly, and turned on her the first ungentle look his face had ever worn to her.

"Thou art unkind and cruel unto me, Namarah," he said, "and thy love is not like to mine for thee, or thou couldst not think possible the thing whereof thou speakest. The soul of Adina slept within him until, at touch of thy soul, it waked; and it lives but for thee alone. If thou must die, and God sees good to prolong my days in the land, whereby He will visit upon me a curse instead of a blessing, my life belongs to thee; the desire of my heart will be still to thee alone, and my soul shall even wait for thy soul."

Then Namarah came again into his arms, and while they clasped her close with love's true tenderness, behold the maiden began softly to weep.

"God reward thee, dear one," she murmured, as her lips rested close against his throat, "for the comfort wherewith thou hast comforted me. I am even satisfied to die to-night, knowing a love like thine. If it please God that I die and thou livest, I beseech thee that thou wilt be even as a son unto my father Jephthah, for his heart is broken within him, and by reason of his vow he giveth up his only child."

"That will I maiden," saith Adina; "and if so be that I shall live and thou diest, that will even be my work in life. Ah, Namarah, my most holy and most beauteous love, hast thou thought upon the weariness and darkness of the life that I will lead without thee, even through youth and manhood and old age?"

"Yea, beloved, I have thought of it," she answered—"be sure that I have thought of it—with a heart made wild with anguish, and it seemeth unto me that thy fate is even a harder one than mine. But now that we have spoken of these things, and thou knowest my thoughts and wishes concerning thy life, if thou art left to live it out without me, let us speak of it no more, and let us even, so far as in us lies, banish it from our thoughts. I would have thee give me a solemn pledge that when I depart on the morrow, I, and the maidens that be my companions, thou wilt

pray continually unto God, as I shall do, this prayer

—even that he will send unto us deliverance. He hath ever heard the prayers of His people who cry unto Him with faith, and I will that thou pray only this-for deliverance out of all our troubles for me and thee in His own good time and way. I feel full confidence that He will hear our prayer, but concerning the means and the time, I will not even have a wish, seeing that wisdom no less than power is His. Our hearts are bare before His sight, and as He readeth mine He seeth that it sorroweth far more than thee and thy sufferings than for mine own, and he can send, both unto thee and me, the rescue that our souls most earnestly desire. Let us, therefore, spend the two months left to me of earth, in praying thus to the God of power and pity. Kneel with me now, Adina, and let us pray this prayer, even in the silence of our hearts."

And side by side, upon the grass beneath the white light of the moon, they knelt together, hand in hand, and lifted up their hearts in prayer. So still and silent was the night that the little brook which ran through the garden, down at the foot of the hill, could be heard gurgling over its stones, and the notes of the doves in their house near by sounded mournfully and pleadingly in their ears. The soft wind of the summer night played lightly over their bowed heads, ruffling Adina's golden curls and blowing against his throat a long tress of Namarah's silky hair. Long time they knelt there, their bodies touching only in that close hand-clasp, but their souls fused into one, on the breath of that fervent prayer.

When they rose from their knees and stood erect in the pale moonlight, both so tall and young and beautiful in their fair white raiment, they turned and wound their arms around each other in an embrace of unspeakable love. Again the night lay wrapped in silence, so that even the softness of their kisses could be heard. Suddenly there was a fluttering above them, and a white bird flew down and alighted in the soft hollow made by their two throats. There it nestled, with a little plaintive moan. As the young man and the maiden strove each to touch and soothe its ruffled feathers, their two hands met and clasped.

"It is the little messenger," said Namarah, as the bird crept closer to the warmth of their necks, between the arch made by their close-pressed cheeks. "It seemeth to be restless and unhappy. There was one of my doves killed by a hawk one day, while this messenger was gone with thee. Thinkest thou it could have been its mate? I saw the great hawk swoop down upon it one day, as it sat alone apart from all the rest, and before I could run to its rescue, the poor little thing had been carried off in those cruel claws. Thou knowest—dost thou not?—that the dove is the image of constancy, and that when it once loses its mate it takes none other evermore."

"Even as it shall be with me," breathed forth Adina, amid the kisses that he pressed upon her hair. "If it please God that I lose the mate whereunto my soul is already wed, so will I live lonely like the mateless bird, until mine end shall come." "So that our faith fail not, it will please God to deliver us," Namarah made answer; "and He hath ways and means of mercy beyond our power to know. Henceforth be our watchword 'Trust,' Adina, and let not these saddening fears be spoken upon our lips."

Then, while the bird still rested between them, they clasped each other closer yet, for with the rising of the sun to-morrow Namarah and her maidens were to set forth unto the mountains, and this was their hour of parting.

Long time they rested there alone, after the bird had fluttered off to its house, and ever the sound of its sad complaining came unto their ears.

"It shall be my companion while that thou art gone," said Adina, "and at night I will take it with me, so that its mourning shall be made against the warmth of my heart, that hath no voice wherewith to utter the greatness of its woe."

"Nevertheless, I shall hear its complainings even with the ears of my soul," said Namarah, "and my heart shall answer them, in sounds inaudible that thy listening soul may hear. And now must I leave thee, beloved, for my father waiteth for our parting to be over, that he may even speak with me himself."

They kissed and clasped and clung, and spake to each other with such holy words of love as pen may not record. They were even in the very presence of death, and God and His angels seemed to look down upon them, from out the opened heavens, for their love was pure and sanctified as the loves of the angels be, and upon its very front was written: "Holiness unto the Lord."



CHAPTER III.

At break of day next morning, Namarah, accompanied by her maidens, dressed all in sad garments of mourning, passed through the streets of Mizpeh and wended their way toward the mountains, and, as they passed along, behold the people came forth of their houses to look upon them, and ever as they saw the maidens, in their sackcloth and ashes, men and women, and even little children, lifted up their voices and wept, for the vow that Jephthah had vowed unto the Lord was known unto all the people; also that the maiden Namarah was gone, according unto the custom of the daughters of Israel, to bewail upon the mountains with the maidens, her companions, that the Lord had seen fit to take away from her the glory of motherhood and the hope that to her might come the honor of giving birth unto the deliverer of Israel.

And as the maidens walked with sad and measured steps, the maiden Namarah walked ever at their head, her stately height and noble form swathed in sackcloth. And, although the hood of her mantle hid her face from view, the people said

she sobbed in passing, because that they saw the fluttering rise and fall of her breast beneath the folds of her gown.

But Namarah was not weeping. Her brow was calm and solemn, and her great eyes serene as be stars. Her vigil had made her pale as the ashes wherewith she had sprinkled her garments, but the look of her face was strong and confident, and ever she whispered in the silence of her heart "He will deliver."

As the town was left behind, and the rugged mountain path up which they were to wend their toilsome way was come in view, Namarah paused, and the maidens who followed, pausing also, saw her part the folds of her garment and take therefrom the messenger-dove which had already served so faithfully. She spake no word, neither looked she to the right nor the left, while all the maidens wondered, but lifting it to her lips she gently kissed it, then raising her arm above her head she held it on her open palm, giving it a little impulse upward, at which it spread its wings and flew, with a sure and steady flight backward along the path that they had come. Namarah stood and looked at it until the whiteness of its feathers was even one with the whiteness of the clouds, and then she turned about and began to climb the mountain-path, her maidens following. Then were there tears in her eyes, in that moment, which overflowed and fell upon her cheek, but no eye there was that saw them save the Eye that seeth all.

Now, the young man Adina, having spent the night in ceaseless vigil also, was at the casement of

his window, before the earliest streak of dawn, his life-blood throbbing to the thought that he was to see once more the form of her whom his soul so greatly loved, albeit speech and touch would be denied him. It had been the maiden's wish that she might not see him on this fateful morning, lest that the sight of his unhappiness might cause her courage to give way. Still it was known to her the house wherein he dwelt, and he waited with his soul athirst, to see her make to him some sign of parting as she passed beneath the casement of his window. The blood flew surging to his heart as the group of maidens came in sight, their mourning garments rosied o'er by the glory of the rising sun, and their approach heralded by the wailings of the people who lined the streets on either side. His face went deadly white, and he was fain to clutch with both his hands at the casement of the window to keep from falling back.

Onward she moved toward him, the form that he was wont to fondle in his arms screened from his loving eyes by those harsh draperies from which the ashes fell, as the morning breezes played about her. He was screened from view behind a curtain, but the resolution rushed upon him, that if she turned and looked, for even one instant upward, he would throw the curtain back and look at her, that she might see the mighty love-light in his face, and the compassion wherewith he pitied her. Strong man as he was it was a bitter thing to bear that she should go onward to suffering and death, and he stand by, in bodily safety, and see it.

But Namarah looked not up, and as she passed beneath his window, her sweet head was bent forward, and she walked on calmly and as if in total unconsciousness of the dying heart that beat so near her. It seemed to him to be a cruel thing, untender and unthoughtful, and Adina rent his clothes, and turned away from the window with great groans of anguish that made one with the wailings of the people in the streets. It almost seemed to him as though he were nothing to heras though she loved him not, and thought no more of him and of his love and woe. He paced the room, with the long strides of an angry beast, and ever and anon great sobs, that brought with them no soothing tears, shook mightily his strong young breast. And he smote his hands together and cried aloud to God to spare. All the day he spent alone, in the anguish of his stricken heart, fearing to go even unto Jephthah, knowing that his presence could be no comfort while that his grief so mastered him; but when evening was come he crept from the house, unseen of any, and went silently to the garden of Jephthah's house, that he might once more be in the place that had seen him so happy in the presence of his soul's love. Still and deserted was the garden, and the wan moon looked down tonight with the same cold face that she had turned upon the far different scene of last night. Adina wandered here and there among the trees, but ever he came back to the dear spot where lately he had stood with Namarah in his arms. The brook still babbled on, and the cooing of the doves came ever to his ears, as if to remind him that all was the same as before, save that Namarah was gone.

Resting his two arms against the trunk of a great tree, he laid his face upon them, shutting out the beautiful garden-scene, in which the maiden was not, and there he rested long in exceeding bitterness of spirit. Suddenly there was a sound of wings, and again the bird which he could recognize by its broken and injured plumage flew down, and hovering above him a moment, as if in doubt, came and nestled on his shoulder.

Adina took it softly in his hands, and turned his sad eyes silently toward the house where he lived alone. Even yet he had not the courage to go to Jephthah, but put it off until the morrow. As he walked along, ever smoothing the bird's feathers with caressing touches, he suddenly became aware of something smooth and hard fastened beneath its wing. Instantly the thought occurred to him that it might be a message from Namarah; but how, indeed, could it be so? Breathless with eagerness, he reached his chamber, and there found lights.

Carefully shutting himself in, and even drawing the curtains of the windows close, he severed the cord that held in place the little folded note, and opening the sheet, read:

"ADINA, MY BELOVED: I can give thee no greeting as I pass thy window, but I shall even then have close to my breast the dove which is to bear this my last message to thee. The message is but this, that thou hast heard so often: I love thee, my most dear one, and I charge thee, by that love, give not thyself to heavy grief, but ever take courage and have hope. If thou lovest me, I would have thee bear up with patience under the heavy burden God hath laid on thee, and to comfort my father Jephthah. Pray ever for deliverance for us both and have faith that God will hear thee. Sorrow not, beloved, seeing that I ever love thee, both in this life and that which is to come. Thine, who doth love thee truly,

NAMARAH."

And underneath she had written the word "Mizpeh."

In reading these lines, the soul of Adina was greatly comforted, so that he felt a new courage come to him, and ever thereafter, until the two months were come to an end, he bore himself patiently and submissively and murmured no more at the will of God. Each day that dawned saw him beside the old man Jephthah, sustaining, comforting and cherishing him, though, mayhap, his own heart was even at that same time sunk down with And ever he prayed to God most earnweariness. estly both night and day that He would comfort the soul of Namarah and deliver them both in His good time. The words, as he would speak them, were beyond his comprehension, for he saw not how what he prayed for could come to pass, but he prayed on still in blind faith, and waited patiently to see how God would answer.

And after he had brought the white dove home that night, it ever came to him afterward of its own accord, flying at sunset into his window and perching there, if he was absent, until he returned, and often he would take it in his hands and talk to it, such words as his frozen heart refused to utter unto human ears, and ever it seemed to give him greater comfort than any human friend.

As the two months of absence of the maiden

Namarah began to draw to a close, the soul of Adina grew each hour more exceedingly sorrowful, and Jephthah also went heavily from morn till evening and took no comfort save in the presence and companionship of Adina, who was become to him even as his own son. And ever the prayers of each went up to God for the maiden Namarah, and Jephthah's prayer was ever that the Lord would strengthen her to endure the trial set before her, but the prayer of Adina was that blind cry for deliverance.

And when the eve of the return of Namarah and her maidens was come, all the people of Mizpeh were ware of it, but so great was their sorrow for the maiden, that they feared to look upon her face, and as, at set of sun the children playing in the streets brought news that the maidens were returning, behold, the people gat them to their houses, they and their children, that none might look upon Namarah in her misery and her affliction.

And as Namarah and her maidens made their way along the streets of Mizpeh, behold, they made a picture sad to see, for their garments of sackcloth were torn and stained with their sojourn in the wildness of the mountains, and their feet were sore and weary, and as Namarah walked first among them, her companions uttered a low wailing of distress. But the maiden herself was silent and made no sound, either with her voice or with the wornout sandals of her feet, but ever moved noiselessly as a shadow, with bent head and hands clasped wearily.

No human creature did they see. The streets of Mizpeh were as uninhabited as were the mountain forests they had left, and a vast and solemn silence, more awful in this place of many habitations than in the open country, brooded over everything.

As they moved along in slow procession, suddenly above their heads there was the sound of wings, and a flock of snow-white doves came downward from high in air, and, flying low, preceded them with slow and steady motions all up the empty streets. And as men or women here or there watched furtively from behind the drawn curtains of their windows, this most strange sight—the maidens in their mourning garments preceded by the flock of white doves—struck awe unto their hearts. And added to the sight there was a strange and awful sound, for even as the maidens crooned their low, sad wails, the doves from their flight in the air joined to the sound their plaintive cooing and complaining.

To the other maidens it seemed as but an accident that the birds should meet and join themselves to the procession; but Namarah believed it not. Her heart told her that her tenderly loved birds had recognized her, and before she reached the door of her father's house one of them had even separated from its companions, and circling a moment, as if in doubt, above her head, presently flew downward and alighted on her shoulder. Then did Namarah unclasp her hands and take it under her cloak and press it against the warmth of her heart; and although the feathers of its wings had grown out again, and it was even smooth and shapely and

snow-white as the rest, she knew it to be the messenger between Adina and herself. Howbeit, she knew not that it had earned a stronger claim to her affection yet, in that it had been the chief companion and comfort of her lover during the long days and nights of her absence.

And when Namarah and her maidens reached the house of Jephthah, behold it was hung with mourning, and though the doors were wide, there was neither friend nor servant to be seen. So Namarah entered silently, and took her way toward the apartment of her father Jephthah; and as she came unto his door, she turned and spake unto the maidens, bidding them stay without in the hall while she went in alone.

And as she thrust open the door and came into the presence of her father Jephthah, behold he too was dressed in mourning garments, and he leaned upon the breast of the young man Adina, who was also clad in sackcloth; and the faces of both men were white as be the faces of the dead; and Adina had grown gaunt and hollow-cheeked and lost his ruddy color, while that her father Jephthah was as one grown old before his time.

And Namarah spake no word, but shutting close the door behind her, she went and put her arms about the neck of her father, but her eyes she gave unto her lover.

Her hood had fallen backward, and her white face rose from out its solemn mourning draperies as a fair flower springing out of earth; and her eyes, made large and luminous through fastings and vigils, seemed as the very windows of her spirit; and in their depth Adina read a love unspeakable, unquenchable and not to be surpassed. He understood her tender thought in clasping first her father before her touch sought his, for it was by reason of her father that this blow was come upon them, and she felt he had great need of comfort and the assurance of her deep, unchanged affection; but in that long, deep look into her lover's eyes, she gave him her whole self—not only her arms and her lips, but the very core of her soul. She emptied herself of self that she might be wholly his. For a moment they rested in that look, quiet and calm as the deeps of ocean, and then the maiden spake:

"I pray thee leave me now, Adina," she saith, softly, as the voice of Jephthah her father brake into great sobs while she smoothed his snow-white hair, and stilled him as a mother might her babe. "I would be with him alone, that my courage fail not; for he hath more need of comfort than either thou or I. Return to me an hour after moon-rise in the garden."

And Adina bowed his head and went, with never so much as a touch of her hand to feed the mighty hunger of his love, howbeit that look in her eyes which rested on him still, even as he left her presence, was as a draught divine wherewith the thirst of his soul might be quenched.

Even before the coming of the time appointed, just as the moon was coming up behind the distant horizon, Adina made his silent way into the garden of Jephthah's house, and stood and waited. The

hour of moonrise was just what it had been two months before, on the night of their parting here, and in his ears were the same sounds of the babbling brook and of the doves in their house near by. Up and down the young man paced, his thumbs thrust into the belt wherewith his white tunic was held in place, and his whole body tense and strained with the mightiness of his hardly mastered excitement. A light glimmered in the room of Jephthah, and on this he kept his gaze, until presently it became in a moment softly shaded, as if to screen the eyes of one who slept. Namarah, indeed, had soothed her father into a gentle slumber, and when it was known unto her that he slept, she stepped forth into the garden.

She had even refreshed her from her journey, and clothed herself in snow-white garments, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, in which she moved softly down the garden-walks to meet him whom her soul did love. The grasses of summer bent beneath the soft pressure of her feet, and the vines divided themselves at the light touches of her hands. The trees above her were as the wall of her temple of love, and the moon pierced through to light it. Adina stood and waited in the spot made sacred to them by the early dawnings, as well as by the fruition of their love; and as the maiden, fair and white as if made of the rays of the moonlight, moved softly toward him, he stretched out his two arms. She came to them with full gladness and assurance, as one of her white doves, after long wandering, cometh home.

And Adina spake no word; only he drew her to him, and folded her to his breast close, close, as though he would never lose her again. As she rested so, feeling against her heart the full throb of his, while that his close clasp tightened and his breath came quick, it seemed to her a moment of such rapture that the thought of her heart came forth in words, as she said, on the breath of a low-drawn sigh:

"I would that I could die even now!"

And Adina answered:

"And I with thee, that our souls together might return to God who gave them."

But Namarah made answer:

"Nay, it was unwisely said, seeing that we have left all to God, and we should have no choice but that His wisdom maketh. Is it not so with thee, Adina? Let me hear thee say it, else my soul can have no rest."

And Adina said, most tenderly:

"Ay, beloved; it is so."

"Most merciful is our God," saith Namarah, "seeing that He hath even comforted the soul of my father Jephthah, who hath fallen into a sweet repose. It will be thou, my Adina, who will miss me most, for the heart of my father Jephthah is, first of all, the heart of a soldier, and rumors have reached him of approaching war, wherein he will be called upon again to lead the hosts of Israel to victory; and it doth soothe me much to feel that therein he will find relief and cure for his sorrowing for me. But thou, my loved one, what wilt

thou do without the maiden of thy love, who doth in turn love thee so mightily that she would even rather die to-morrow, in the flower of her youth, knowing the sweet possession of thy love, than live the longest life allotted unto woman, apart from thee or in possession of that lesser love wherewith most women are content. Speak thou, beloved. Dost thou not feel that God hath richly blessed us both and crowned our lives with good?"

And Adina answered:

"Yes; I feel it, maiden. And so great is my belief in His lovingness and mercy that I cease not, even now, to pray the prayer thou gavest me for deliverance."

"It is most sure," said Namarah, earnestly. may not be such as we would choose or look for; but He hath heard that prayer of mine and thine each time our hearts have breathed it, and the answer doth somewhere await us. I love thy body, my Adina," she went on, "thy golden curls, wherein I seem to touch warm rays of rippling sunlightthy sweet soft flesh, thy noble figure—thy hands, thy arms, thy most sweet lips and eyes, but more than these I love the spirit in thee, the self of thy soul, that in thy kisses and the glances of thine eyes is made one with the soul within this body, which is yet a dearer thing to thee, I know, than the flesh and eyes and lips thou lovest so. All flesh is as grass, and as the flower of the field passeth away, but our souls are of God-our love is but a part of the Supreme Love, and whatever happens to our bodies, surely our souls shall live forever in that love, in the presence of God and the angels."

She spake these words in solemn whisperings, more tender than the cooing of the doves, more murmurous than the rippling of the brook, and as Adina bent his head to answer her, their lips met in a solemn kiss.

No eye saw that parting, when at last Adina wrenched his heart away from hers. They two were alone in the silence with God. Even the dove came not near them to-night, but remained apart and alone, as if it had knowledge of all and forbore to come between the beating of their hearts and the communion of their souls.

At the rising of the sun next morning, the altar was made ready in the heart of a deep wood, and by it stood a priest of the High God. The wood was in readiness, and the fire prepared, nor was the offering for the sacrifice wanting. She stood, a pure virgin, clad in stainless white, and on her right hand was her father Jephthah, and on her left, the young man Adina. And the face of the maiden Namarah was calm and peaceful, and her eyes trustful and quiet as be the eyes of children when they know their parents are close by. And her face, for all its paleness, was more beauteous to look upon than ever it had been before, for the light that shone upon it was not wholly that cast by the rising sun, but, as it were, a light from within her soul. And Adina's face was radiant, too, so that it seemed as if one light illumined them from

within, even as the same sun from without. And Namarah's voice, as she spake, was tranquil and assured.

"Make ready thy fire, O priest of God," Namarah said, "for all is ready." And she turned and kissed her father Jephthah full tenderly. Then, speaking once more unto the priest, she said:

"I pray thee, while that the fire is kindling, suffer us to kneel and say one prayer—I and the young man Adina."

And they knelt together, both in virgin white, their hands clasped close, and their faces raised to Heaven, and the prayer of their hearts, even as the fire blazed and crackled, and the knife gleamed sharp and threatening near by, was that the God in whom they trusted would deliver them, in His own time and way.

And they knelt so long in silence that the priest, who wished not to interrupt their prayers, was fain at last to speak to them, lest the sacred fires should burn too low. But there came no answer to his words, and when he turned and looked into their faces, that wondrous light was gone from them; for their spirits had fled together, and the glare of sunshine upon them revealed that they were even the faces of the dead.

And it was even so that God delivered them. This was His time and place, and He had chosen His own way. And that the vow which Jephthah had vowed might be accomplished, the body of the maiden Namarah was laid upon the altar, and with

it the body of the young man Adina, a burnt-offering unto the Lord.

And as the fires upon the altar began to sink, an object that seemed to fall straight from out the sky dropped down and fell into the flames; and lo! it was the body of a snow-white dove, which had been even dead before it touched the fire upon the altar.

THE END.



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